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VEDANTA DARPANA

OR MIRROR OF VEDANTA



—oOo—
"Om Bhuh, Bhuvah, Swah:
We meditate upon that Adorable Light
of the Deva who is their Creator.
May He lead our thoughts to Him!"

*Gayatri—the most Sacred
Hymn of the Vedas.*

Vol. II

JANUARY, 1932

No. 1

SELECTED VERSES FROM THE BHAGAVAD GITA

With Explanation.

Verse 1, Chapter 1

Assembled on the holy field of Kurukshetra desiring to fight,
What did my own sons and also the sons of Pandu (my
brother) do?

This question was put to Sanjaya by the blind king, Dhritarastra. Sanjaya was endowed with the power of supernatural vision by Vyasa, who was a great sage. Sanjaya sat by the side of Dhritarastra in his palace, and narrated to him all the events of the war of Kurukshetra.

Kurukshetra means the field of the Kurus. Kuru was the name of an older king of the Lunar dynasty to which Dhritarastra belonged. On that field many religious sacrifices had been performed by the kings of that dynasty. The reason why Dhritarastra asked Sanjaya what his own sons and nephews did instead of asking how they fought, although it was obvious that they engaged in war, was because he suspected if the holy influence of Kurukshetra had produced any change for the better in the minds of his own sons who were very wicked and further intensified the righteous nature of his nephews, then, in either event, the horrible war might have been avoided.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA

PARABLE OF THE DISCIPLE AND THE ELEPHANT.

True it is that God dwells even in the tiger, but we must not go and face the animal. So it is true that God dwells even in the most wicked, but it is not meant that we should associate with them.

A certain Guru (spiritual guide) taught his disciple that every created thing was Narayana (God), and the disciple took him at his word. One day the disciple met an elephant on the road. The animal was advancing towards him and the driver (mahut) was shouting "Move away! Move away!" The disciple argued in his mind, "Why should I move away?" "I am Narayana, so is the elephant; what fear has Narayana for Himself?" Thinking thus, he did not move. At last the elephant took him up by his trunk and dashed him aside. He was hurt severely, and going back to his Master he related the whole adventure. The Guru said: "Well said, my son! You are Narayana and so is the elephant; but why did you not pay heed to the warnings of the Mahut Narayana (driver God) who had asked you to move away?"

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EXTRACTS FROM A LECTURE

By SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

I will tell you a little story. You have heard the eloquent speaker who has just finished say: "Let us cease abusing each other," and he was very sorry that there should be always so much variance.

But I think I should tell you a story which would illustrate the cause of this variance.

A frog lived in a well. It had lived there for a long time. It was born there and brought up there, and yet was a small, little frog. Of course, the evolutionists were not there then to tell us whether the frog lost its eyes or not, but, for our story's sake we must take it for granted that it had its eyes, and that every day it cleansed the water of all the worms and bacilli that lived in it, with an energy that would do credit to our modern bacteriologists. In this way it went on and became a little sleek and fat. Well, one day another frog that lived in the sea came and fell into the well.

"Where are you from?"

"I am from the sea."

"The sea! How big is that? Is it as big as my well?" and he took a leap from one side of the well to the other.

"My friend," said the frog of the sea, "how do you compare the sea with your little well?"

Then the frog took another leap and asked, "Is your sea so big?"

"What nonsense you speak, to compare the sea with your well!"

"Well then," said the frog of the well, "nothing can be bigger than my well; there can be nothing bigger than this; this fellow is a liar, so turn him out."

That has been the difficulty all the while.

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I am a Hindu. I am sitting in my own little well and thinking that the whole world is my little well. The Christian sits in his little well and thinks the whole world is his little well. The Mohammedan sits in his little well and thinks that is the whole world. I have to thank you of America for the great attempt you are making to break down the barriers of this little world of ours, and hope that, in the future, the Lord will help you to accomplish your purpose.

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ART OF INDIA

(A Symbol of Spirituality)

By DHAN GOPAL MUKERJI

Since religion dominates every phase of life in India, our art which is a living social force, is bound to be profoundly religious. Whether the art be Hindu or Mohammedan, at its very core it bears the stamp of spirituality. The largest number of Mohammedan monuments of Beauty are directly sacerdotal, for nearly all of them are houses of God. If there be any piece of Islamic architecture that seems to surpass even the Taj Mahal it is that house of worship "Moti Masjid," the Pearl Mosque. The Masjid and the Taj were built in the seventeenth century. Then the Taj too, is a spiritual structure. For its maker intended it to symbolize Immortality of Love, in a world swayed by death. Even the most powerful secular structure, such as Akbar's vast rose-red city of Fatehpore, was dedicated to the following religious inscription:—

"Said Jesus on whom be peace: The world is a bridge. Pass over it, but build no house therein. Who hopes for an hour, hopes for eternity. Spend the hour in prayer, the rest is unknown."

If we turn from the Mohammedan to the Hindu art we find that it has remained religion-centered from 3000 B.C. to our time. Elura, which was a mountain cave cut out of a single hill within the first five hundred years of the Christian era, the Karla Cave temple that was hollowed out of a mountain-side about 200 B.C. and the painted cave temples of Ajanta and Bagh, all tell stories of Gods and Heroes or record the sacred legends of Buddha's life.

Even as modern an art as that of painting by the Rajputs and the Moghuls (1500 to 1800 A.D.) depict mostly religious themes. If the best Rajput art illustrated Hindu holy books and sacred music, the best of the Mohammedan-Moghul painters illuminated pages of the Koran, or depicted lives of the Pirs, Saints. In short, Hindu or Mohammedan, man or woman, artist or artisan—no Indian can escape the inclusive embrace of religion.

It is a well-known fact that there is no undertaking of life, which an Indian starts without a Sacerdotal ceremony. That is why a Christian critic of our country has said, "The Hindu eats religiously, sleeps religiously, and even robs religiously." Even a confraternity of thieves, the Thugs, never embarked upon a piece of stealing without rituals, prayers and song. If thieves are so religious, an honest artist is bound to live by injecting religion into everything he does. He carries on deep meditation after waking up. And he says his prayers before embarking upon an artistic project. He excavates his marbles from the hillside after prayers, and carries them home with thanksgiving.

In India today when they are rearing temples or secular houses, the craftsmen insist on a religious ceremony from the very start. Here is one of the oldest hymns that gives

us the spirit of the workers at the laying of the foundation of an edifice. Even in my translation of a translation the reader will perceive beauty and holiness: "May peace dwell here in (mantra, vachan, vala) in deed, thought and word. May all be housed here in unity and harmony!—May hate never come near this building! As many instruments make but a single harmony, may father, mother, son and daughter live here in peace!" (Rig Veda.)

Though the preceding lines go back to ten centuries before the Christian era, they and many other hymns like them are invoked at the erecting of a house today. After the work has been started on a house all the workers including the unskilled ones sing innumerable folk-songs, in order to "Season the mortar and the bricks with gladness." Any casual visitor going by a home in the process of erection will be able to hear the "Mistri-songs"—"builders ditties" running like rain over walls and floors. If the foreign visitor is interested and listens closely he will discern a singing group set apart. They are the carvers carving wood. Here one man is slowly cutting out of wood a lotus—the sacred jewel in the lotus—of the Buddhist. There is another carving a God and his thunderbolt for the end of a beam, while a third is painting impeccable circles on a piece of paneling in order to symbolize the wheel of life. The reason for their singing is that with their songs they seek to couzen beautiful forms out of wood and color. They go by a common saying, "If the field has to be watered for the growing of grain, wood and stone will not blossom into beauty without song. Song to the stone is what water does to the field."

There is also a commercial reason for singing at work. Whether a man weaves a shawl or fashions a pot he pours

into it many kinds of song, because otherwise the "object that he is making may not grow beautiful enough to sell." How keenly he feels this truth can be gauged by the names a weaver gives to his fabrics: One he calls "Morningdew" and the other "Woven silence."

If we turn our attention from folk-art and examine the work of the so-called "artists" we come upon nothing different. Take the poems of the greatest living Bengali poet, Tagore. They are not read, as esoteric groups read poetry in England and America. On the contrary, they are sung by the multitudes. This affects more than sixty million souls. If we travel to other provinces we shall perceive the same result. In the United Provinces and the Punjab nearly fifty million people sing the poems of Ekbāl, their greatest living poet. Not only modern poetry but ancient epics, the Rāmāyana, the Mahābhārata, and parts of the Persian Shah Nama are sung in modern dialect by the common people of Northern India.

In Southern India the relation of the people to the art of poetry goes even deeper. There can be found thousands of families who sing the Rāmāyana in Sanskrit. It is equivalent to hearing the *Ilaid* sung by the Greeks of today in every third home of Greece in Homer's tongue. From the art of poetry if we pass to the arts of sculpture and painting we shall perceive a parallel truth. "The sculpture of India has most probably remained at a high level from the days of Mahēnjo Daro (about 3000 B.C.) to our time." [N. Y. Times, Nov. 22, '31.] This is due to what Mohamēdan and Christian fanatics call Idolatry—the making of many Gods for the spring-worship, autumn-worship, and other occasions during the year throughout India. The most

important period, that of the Ratha festival of Juggernaut, well known to the world. It is symbolic of the worship during the rainy season; innumerable Gods are hewn out of rocks, fashioned from clay, and carved out of wood.

The tradition of Indian sculpture does not die out because of lack of work. As for the patrons of our iconography, the people show their highest appreciation for the newly made Gods by worshipping them. What more can all the artists expect of their fellow-men in any country? After the season of worship is over almost all the Gods are flung into the river at whose bottom they remain forever.

Along with sculpture a vast amount of temporary painting is done on cheese cloth. They, too, are pictures of Gods and god-like men. For instance in Juggernaut one can purchase beautiful paintings on cheesecloth for a mere song. Though they sell at a low price their art is not negligible. Throughout India portraits of Gods, heroes and Saints are bought and worshipped by the common people. The root of such a friendly relationship between the contemporary artists and their fellow-citizens lies in the "Traditionalness" of Indian paintings. In spite of all the terrifying archaisms and modernisms that the present art of India contains, its resemblance to our classical art is profound. The contemporary sculpture, painting, and poetry bears the stamp of their respective ancestors as sons of their fathers. •

For instance, in the realm of poetry, though many of Tagore's poems resemble the verses of the Upanishad, they are saturated with the Baul, folkidioms, of Modern Bengal.

In sculpture the seated clay figures of saints in meditation wrought now, are but living descendants of the meditating ancient Indians of 3000 B.C. who have been excavated re-

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cently at "Mahenjo Doro" of the Indus Valley. Between them lie a gulf of nearly five thousand years which is bridged almost completely by the fresco-paintings and sculpture of Ajanta and Elura (100 B.C. to 500 A.D.). In Ajanta, Elura, Nasik, Karla, Bagh and other places one finds the same seated figures, saturated with the intense life of their time. Each age took over the art-conventions of its predecessor, then put into them a contemporary quality which made them not imitations but vivid symbols of the social life of their time. The people and art of India are very close to their antiquity. The past and the present are so intimately associated that by looking at today's common art, one can easily return to our yesterday. There is hardly as strong a parallel to this astonishing feature anywhere else in the world.

In the east the artists of our time are very much like their ancestors. They toil like their lesser brethren the artisans. Whatever they create disappears in that race-life. Our art is so strong a social force that rarely an individual artist is honored because of his work. It is not the poet but his poems that matter. We have sung Tagore's songs through sixty million throats; but we never wasted any spectacular attention on him. That is why he has always honored himself by calling himself the Bengali folk's singer. He, the artist, is a part of the social whole. In ancient as well as in modern times, no Hindu artist can grasp such a slogan as "Art for Art's Sake." Our craftsmen wrought beautiful things because the society, to which they belonged, demanded them. In no age have they set themselves apart from the social whole. In caste-ridden India there is no caste called "Art for Art's Sake."

All societies fully alive to their need of the beautiful should hold fast to their simple art. For art is the most persuasive social force. As the Prophet has put it, "If thou hast two pieces of copper buy bread with one, but a Narcissus blossom with the other. The former will minister to thy body, but the latter will nourish God's greatest gift to thee—thy Soul."

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TRANSLATION OF THE INTRODUCTION TO SAMKARA'S COMMENTARY ON BRAHMA SUTRAS OR VEDANTA APHORISMS.

By SRI AROBINDA GHOSE

The Indemonstrability of the selfsameness of the subject and the object, having for their respective spheres the connotations of "thou" (non-ego) and "I" (ego), and possessing contradictory natures like darkness and light, being established there follows a *fortiori* the indemonstrability of the selfsameness of their respective qualities also: therefore the superimposition of the object which has for its sphere the connotations of "thou" (non-ego) and of its qualities, on the subject which has for its sphere the connotations of "I" (ego) which is intelligence itself; and contrariwise, the superimposition of the subject and its qualities upon the object, must needs be erroneous. Nevertheless this is the instinctive practice of mankind to say "I am this," "this is mine," confounding the true and the false—a practice having for its basis a false knowledge with respect to the object and the subject, which are absolutely different, by superimposing through non-discrimination of one from the other, the re-

spective identity and respective attributes of one upon the other.

One may ask,—what is it that is denoted as superimposition? The answer is,—It is the appearance of what has been observed previously in something else, taking the form of recollection. This some define as the assumption of something else's attribute to a thing. But some define it as the error attaching to mistaken apprehension of the superimposed thing for the thing superimposed upon. But others call it the assumption of the possession of contrary attributes in the very thing superimposed upon another thing. But be that as it may, each of these definitions of superimposition does not fail to recognize it as the presentation of the attributes not its own in a thing; and accordingly we have popular experience which speaks of "mother-of-pearl" indeed appearing like silver, the moon though single appearing double.

How then can there be the superimposition of the objects' attributes upon the inward self, which is non-object. For it is on an object situated before him that everyone superimposes another object and you are speaking of the inward self which transcends the connotations of the non-ego as not being an object.

The reply to this objection is: After all this inward-self is not a non-object in the absolute sense and that on account of its being the object of the connotations of the ego and the fact of the inward-self's existence being established by reason of its being intuitively perceived. Nor again is it an invariable rule that the superimposition of any object must take place solely on another object situated before the superimposer. For even on space which is imperceptible,

ignorant men superimpose conductivity, color, tint, etc. Similarly the superimposition of the non-self upon the inward-self is not excluded from the range of possibility. This so characterized superimposition the learned regard as Ignorance (Nescience) and in contradistinction thereto they give the name of Knowledge to the determination of the essential nature of things. Such being the case here, upon whatsoever there is a superimposition of anything, the former is not affected even in the slightest degree either by defects or excellences proceeding from the latter. .

It is with the presupposition of that natural superimposition of the self and the non-self which is called Ignorance that whatever has to do with proofs and the objects of proof in connection with ordinary life as well as with the Vedas has started and all philosophical canons are concerned with injunctions, prohibitions and emancipations.

Now how comes it, one may ask, that means of Knowledge such as perception, etc., and philosophical canons also come within the range of what depends on Ignorance?

The answer is: It is so, because of the impossibility of the operation of the means of knowledge in the absence of the demonstrability of one devoid of the delusion of I and Mine with respect to the body and the senses, etc., as being the knower: for without the requisition of the senses, there is no possibility of putting into operation such means of knowledge as perception. Nor again is the operation of the senses possible without there being something for them to take their stand on. Nor again is there the possibility of anything being done by the body without there being upon it the superimposition of the nature of the Self. Nor again in the absence of all this, can the agency as a Knower be

established with respect to the Self which is free from attachment. Nor again is the activity of the means of Knowledge possible in the absence of Knowing agent—(lit. agency)—Therefore, we say that the means of Knowledge such as perception, etc., and the philosophical canons certainly come within the range of what depends on Ignorance.

They are so also because of their making no distinction between man and brutes: for just as brutes, beasts, etc., when an impression is made on their auditory organs by means of sound, etc., recoil from it on perceiving the sounds, etc., to be disquieting, and advance on perceiving it to be comforting; just as when they perceive a man rushing towards them with a stick in his raised hands they attempt to run away—thinking “he wishes to kill me,” and when they perceive him coming with a handful of green grass, they go towards him; even so human beings also who have a developed understanding, when they perceive fierce looking, angry, strong men with swords in their raised hands, retreat from them; but towards those who are contrary in appearance and behavior, they turn themselves.

Thus human beings' procedure with respect to means and objects of knowledge agree with that of brutes and beasts. And it is indeed well known that the brute's, beast's procedure with respect to perception and other means of knowledge is dependent on the absence of discrimination (between object and object, or, as Deussen puts it, previous judgment). From our perceiving the two to be alike, there arises the certainty that that procedure of even men who are of a more developed intellect, with respect to perception, etc., is the same, during the period of their continuing ignorance. But although for procedure in conformity with the pre-

scriptions laid down in the sacred canons that man is qualified who has previously attained the requisite insight without being ignorant of the relation between the Self and the other world; nevertheless in that qualification one does not expect to be included the knowledge of the truth concerning the transmigrating self which is knowable from the Vedānta, is placed above hunger and other bodily pangs and transcends caste distinction such as that between Brahmins, Kshatriyas, etc. This is so, owing to the uselessness of such knowledge for the attainment of the requisite qualification and even its being opposed thereto.

And the sacred canons which remain operative only previously to the attainment of such knowledge of the self does not transcend the sphere of what depends on Ignorance. Thus for example a Brahmin should sacrifice and such other texts depend for their operativeness upon the superimposition of particular caste, stage of life, age, condition and the like upon the Self.

We have already stated that, what is called superimposition, is putting the notion of a particular thing into that which is not that thing. Thus for example, my son, wife, etc., being hale or otherwise, I myself am hale or otherwise; this is superimposing external attributes on the self. Similarly there is superimposition of bodily attributes in thinking "I am lean, I am dark, I stand, I walk and I jump"; in the same way there is the superimposition of the attributes of the sense-organs in thinking "I am dumb, I am a hermaphrodite, I am deaf, I am one-eyed." Likewise there can be superimposition on the self of the attributes of the internal organs such as desire, intention, doubt, resolution, etc.

Thus having superimposed the producer of the ego notion

upon the inward self which is the witness of all its motions, contrariwise one is liable to superimpose also that inward-self, the seer of all, upon the internal organ, etc. In this manner goes on this instinctive superimposition in the form of erroneous conception without beginning and end, producer of the states of doing and suffering, and universally visible.

It is for the purpose of eradicating this cause of all evil and with a view to the attainment of the knowledge of the Self's unity that the study of all Vedanta-texts is undertaken. And that this is the purpose of all Vedanta-texts, we shall show in his enquiry into the embodied Self. Of the treatise of the Vedanta Mimamsa about to be expounded by us, this is the opening Aphorism:—*Atha atah Bramajijnasa*—Now then enquiry into Brahman.

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VEDANTA: A Synopsis.

By the Editor

Vedanta comprises the basic principle of all Religions and Philosophies. It is absolutely unsectarian, impersonal and universal. It harmonizes science and philosophy with religion.

In India philosophy is not denial but fulfillment of religion. Vedanta does not seek to make proselytes, but endeavors to make the followers of other religions broader and better in their own persuasions by opening their eyes to the fundamental and final unity of all religions; that all faiths and beliefs have a common origin and lead to one and the same Goal, only called by different name—God, Good, Law, Love, etc.

Vedanta is in complete accord with Science. Science literally means knowledge. All forms of knowledge are helpful to mankind in their struggle for existence and advancement. Vedanta has no dread of science and scientific conclusions, on the contrary, it appreciates them, welcomes them and embraces them. Unity in Variety is the plan of nature. Both science and religion are attempts to establish this unity.

Just as the kind and benevolent Mother prepares different dishes suited to the various tastes and capacities of her different children, even so has Vedanta laid down different paths of Truth-realization suited to the various mental and spiritual tendencies and capabilities of men standing at different stages of progress.

Vedanta is the synthesis of all religions and "can satisfy at once a Thomas a Kempis and a Huxley." Vedanta preaches holiness and not sin, love and not hatred, harmony and not dissension. Its teachings are intensely practical and indeed there is no higher preparation for a quiet and contemplative life than the study and practice of Vedanta.

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NEW YEAR'S GREETINGS

The Vedanta Darpana completes its first year and commences the second, on January 1st, 1932. Through the generous support of friends and members of the Vedanta Society and our subscribers, the first year of its existence has been quite successful. It is to be hoped that the second year will be equally successful through the same sympathetic appreciation. On the second anniversary of its birth we send our best thoughts and wishes to you all for a Happy New Year.

—Editor.

VEDANTA DARPANA

OR MIRROR OF VEDANTA

—oOo—
"Om Bhuh, Bhuvah, Swah:
We meditate upon that Adorable Light
of the Deva who is their Creator.
May He lead our thoughts to Him!"

Gayatri—the most Sacred
Hymn of the Vedas.

Vol. II.

FEBRUARY, 1932

No. 2

SELECTED VERSES FROM THE BHAGAVAD GITA

•With Explanation.

Verse 1, Chapter 1

Further comment upon the 1st verse of the first chapter
(continued from the issue of January 1932).

Metaphysical interpretation of the war of Kurukshetra .

Among the Hindus there are scholars who offer a metaphysical explanation of the war mentioned in the 1st verse of the Bhagavad Gita. They say that the battle between the two contending parties stands for the battle in man—between his higher nature, conscience, on the one hand, and his lower nature, the passions, on the other. The Mythological wars between the Devas and the Asuras, and also between Aharmazd and Aharman, are only allegorical expressions of this internal war. The blind king and his children denote, respectively, ignorance and, ignorance begotten vices. The other party represents virtues such as truthfulness, justice, courage, heroism, kindness, etc. Krishna is the supreme Self and is shown as always on the side of virtue. The heart of man, which is in its own nature pure and spotless, is represented by the holy plain of Kurukshetra. In war between virtue and vice, virtue wins the victory—the divine triumphs over the animal.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA PARABLE OF A MAN SEEKING A LIGHT

So long as God seems to be outside, in different places, so long there is ignorance. But when God is realized within, that is true knowledge.

A man woke up at midnight and desired to smoke. He wanted a light, so he went to a neighbor's house and knocked at the door. Someone opened the door and asked him what he wanted. The man said: "I wish to smoke. Can you give me a light?" The neighbor replied: "What is the matter with you? You have taken so much trouble and awakened us at this hour, when in your hand you have a lighted lantern." What a man wants is already with him; but he still wanders here and there in search of it.

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SERMON SENTENCES

Religion must not be separated from life, nor God from the world.

Religion is an inherent power in man. No one is without it.

Man's Swadharma or own religion is his relationship to, and realization of, his ideal.

"God dwells in the hearts of all beings" uniting them all into a perfect whole in Himself like unto the thread running through the beads.

All fear arises from the notion of Dwaita (duality). In true love, which is God, there is no fear, no separation. It conquers all fear and breaks down the limitations of Space and Time.

The noblest expression of love is renunciation and service.

We should learn how to be wisely worldly and not how to be worldly wise.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

Extracts from an Address at the Chicago World's Fair.

Much has been said of the common ground of religious unity. I am not going just now to venture my own theory. But if any one here hopes that this unity will come by the triumph of any one of the religions and destruction of the others, to him I say: "Brother, yours is an impossible hope." Do I wish that the Christian would become Hindu? God forbid. Do I wish that the Hindu or Buddhist would become Christian? God forbid.

The seed is put in the ground, and earth and air and water are placed around it. Does the seed become the earth, or the air, or the water? No. It becomes a plant, it develops after the law of its own growth, assimilates the air, the earth and the water, converts them into plant substance, and grows into a plant.

Similar is the case with religion. The Christian is not to become a Hindu or a Buddhist; nor a Hindu or a Buddhist to become a Christian. But each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve his individuality and grow according to his own law of growth.

If the Parliament of Religions has shown anything to the world it is this: "It has proved to the world that holiness, purity and charity are not the exclusive possessions of any church in the world and that every system has produced men and women of the most exalted character. In the face of this evidence, if any one dreams of the exclusive survival of his own religion and the destruction of others, I pity him from the bottom of my heart, and point out to him that upon the banner of every religion will soon be written, in spite of their resistance: "Help and not Fight," "Assimilation and not Destruction," "Harmony and Peace and not Dissension."

YOGA; ITS THEORY AND PRACTICE

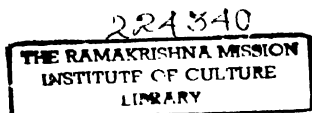
By the Editor

The word Yoga etymologically means union,—the act of union, the state of union or the method of union. According to Hindu Philosophy our individual soul is a mere reflection of the universal soul which is Brahman. The soul is one, infinite and indivisible. The idea of individuality is an erroneous one. There is no such thing as individuality. Yoga teaches us how to destroy this mistaken idea and how to realize our union or oneness with Brahman.

Yoga Philosophy is the supplement to Sankhya Philosophy. Patanjali is its author. According to Sankhya there are twenty-four principles or categories and by the knowledge of these categories we attain to Kaivalya,—isolation, aloneness or absolute freedom. Discrimination or analysis of the Universe is the means of attaining to this state of freedom. Patanjali's method is more practical than that of Sankhya. He prescribes a series of ascetic exercises for the attainment of supreme realization which he calls Samadhi. Sankhya does not believe in Iswara (God) as Creator or Ruler of the Universe; while Yoga postulates an Iswara as Ruler of the Universe. Sankhya admits two entities as real and eternal, Purusha (soul) and Prakriti (nature). It does not make it a point to vehemently deny the existence of Iswara, but it says as the existence of Iswara cannot be proved by any of the accepted means of knowledge (Pramanas) and as Prakriti is enough to account for creation, there is no necessity of admitting the existence of an Iswara as the Creator of the Universe. Again if Iswara is free and perfect he cannot create. For creation means an action preceded by a wish; why should he wish if he is free and full? If he wishes

or desires, he is not free. But Sankhy admits rulers or lords of Cycles. The soul after it has attained to freedom can become the ruler of a cycle if it chooses so, but never the permanent or eternal Lord of the Universe. The Iswara of Patanjali again is not the highest object to be achieved, but meditation on Him is one of the several means of attaining to Samadhi. Thus evidently he assigns an inferior place to Iswara.

There are four kinds of Yoga or means of controlling the mind: (1) Hatha, (2) Raja, (3) Mantra and (4) Laya. Hatha Yoga consists chiefly in the practice of Pranayama. According to Hatha Yoga mind follows Prana, i. e. if Prana is controlled mind also becomes controlled. The Hatha Yogins also practice several kinds of physical and psychophysical postures and processes to keep the body and mind in a healthy condition. Raja Yoga on the contrary holds that Prana follows the mind. If the mind is controlled Prana also becomes controlled. Therefore in the first aphorism Patanjali says "Yoga is the restraint of the mind from taking on various forms.". The word Raja means great or luminous. Raja Yoga therefore means the great Yoga or the Yoga that leads to enlightenment. It consists in the practice of eight accessories called Yogangas. These we shall describe later. Mantra Yoga consists in repeating certain formulae in a regular order with intent mental concentration on their meaning. Laya Yoga consists in fixing the attention on some internal object and becoming absorbed in it to the extent of forgetting oneself completely. The best method to begin with is the absorption in the sound which is heard on closing the ears. This sound, when studied in



this manner, with concentration, will assume various intonations and will be felt all through the body and will lead to Samadhi.

The object of Yoga is to free the mind from the influence of the world. Our mind is scattered over the things of the world; by study and continuous practice we are to withdraw the mind from the objects and concentrate it on the Self (Atman). Purusha (Soul) is eternally pure and equable, but by contact with Prakriti (Nature) it becomes tainted with the qualities of Prakriti. As the color of a flower is only reflected in a crystal, so the qualities of Prakriti are temporarily reflected in Purusha, though it is eternally pure and spotless in itself. The removal of this apparent identity of Purusha with Prakriti is the end of Yoga. This is achieved by the practice of the eightfold method propounded by the great teachers of Yoga.

The first step in Yoga is called Yama, forbearance. It consists in non-injuring, truthfulness, non-stealing, continence and non-receipt of gifts. Non-injuring means abstinence from giving pain to any being, either by thought or word or deed. By the practice of non-injuring the heart becomes purified and when one becomes established in it, he is non-injured by any animal and in his presence animals that are naturally hostile to each other forget their hostility and live like friends. Truthfulness consists in telling what is heard, seen or felt without exaggeration or extenuation. When the Yogin becomes established in truthfulness, he gets the power of attaining for himself and others the fruits of works without the works. Non-stealing means the absence of covetousness or greed for anything. By the establishment of non-

stealing all wealth comes to the Yogin. Continence means control over low impulses and desires. Physical and mental vigor comes from the establishment of continence. By non-receipt of gifts is meant non-attachment. It is mean and degrading and demoralizing to receive any gift from others. The Yogin should have no desire for presents. By being established in this virtue the Yogin gets the knowledge of the how and wherefore of existence and memory of past incarnations.

The second discipline is Niyama, observance. It consists in cleanliness, contentment, asceticism, study and resignation to Iswara. There are two kinds of cleanliness, internal and external. Purity of mind is called the internal cleanliness. When the Yogin attains to purity of mind he becomes loving and sympathetic. He sees his own self in the self of all beings. The external cleanliness consists in keeping the body and surrounding things clean and pure. From internal cleanliness arises purification of the Sattva element, cheerfulness of the mind, fixity of attention, subjugation of the senses and fitness for the realization of self. The result of external cleanliness is the disgust of one's own body and non-intercourse with others. Superlative happiness arises from contentment. There is no happiness in running after the things of the world nor in their acquisition. The result of this is anxiety, disappointment and despair. From indulgence no happiness can ever come. The way to true happiness and peace lies through control or contentment. From asceticism or rigorous exercises arise the occult powers in the body and in the senses. There are innumerable occult powers of

which eight are chief. They are called Siddhis. The student of Yoga should not be attached to these miraculous powers. They are not the highest objects of Yoga. They come spontaneously as natural results of practice. They should be regarded as obstacles in the way of spiritual advancement. The aim of the Yogi is not the achievement or acquisition of any power but isolation or aloneness—total freedom from the fetters of Prakriti. By study and repetition of sacred words is produced communication with desired deities. From resignation to Iswara results the attainment of deep concentration.

The third step is called Asana, posture. It consists in holding the body firm and immovable in a peculiar position. There are eighty-four postures recommended by the teachers of Yoga. Of these four are chief. When one of these postures is mastered the Yogin conquers all the pairs of opposites like heat and cold, pleasure and pain, honor and insult, etc.

Pranayama is the fourth step. Pranayama means control of breath. When breath has become regular, rhythmical, deep and slow the lungs grow strong and the whole physical system healthy and sound. If Pranayama is practiced rightly and diligently no disease can come and life is prolonged; nay by practice of Pranayama the Yogi can control death. There are three grades in Pranayama. The beginner should sit erect keeping the head, neck and chest in a straight line, in the open air or in a room provided with free ventilation, and breathe in and out through both nostrils as slowly and deeply as he can without any strain on the lungs or any other part of the body. He should practice this exercise

twice a day, morning and evening. Care should always be taken to avoid contaminated air and exhaustion. He must begin with four or five breaths at each time and increase the number slowly and gradually. The teacher should be consulted whenever he experiences any difficulty or new phenomenon.

When the first exercise in Pranayama has become easy the student can take up the next higher one. This exercise consists in breathing in, holding the breath in the lungs and breathing out again, by both the nostrils in equal length of time. This also should be increased very gradually and carefully under the direction of a teacher—the same condition as enjoined in the first exercise should be strictly observed. In the third exercise of Pranayama the three modifications are regulated by time, space and number, either long or short. When all the modifications are combined in one act, the time varies in the ratio of 1, 4 and 2. The length of the breath varies in accordance with the prevalence of the Tattvas—the five subtle elements of nature. It has been calculated that the breath is 12, 16, 4, 8 and 1 finger breadth long as the predominating Tattva is earth, water, light, air and ether respectively. The performer of Pranayama should breathe in by the left nostril, closing the right nostril by the thumb of the right hand in 4 seconds (or repeating a sacred word like Aum or Soham 4 times). Then he should hold the breath in the lungs closing the left nostril also with the middle and ring fingers for 16 seconds (or repeating the sacred word 16 times). Then he should breathe out by the right nostril in 8 seconds (or repeating the sacred word 8 times). Then breathe in through the right nostril in 4 sec-

onds, hold the breath in the lungs for 16 seconds and breathe out by the left nostril in 8 seconds. He should repeat this exercise alternately as stated above 4 or 6 times in the beginning, morning and evening.

The length of breathing and the number of acts should be increased gradually. The result of Pranayama is the awakening of the Kudalini, the coiled up (serpent) energy at the root of the spinal cord, the basic center and the attainment of the light called "Prajna."

There are three currents in the spinal cord: the afferent or sensory (Ida) and the efferent or motor (Pingala) and the other a fine current along the spinal canal called the Susumna. In ordinary persons the central canal (Susumna) is closed at the lower extremity. The Yogi by practice of Pranayama rouses up the Kundalini which forces open the closed end of the canal and passes along it through the various centers therein called Chakras, disks or plexuses. When this energy reaches the last Chakra in the brain the Yogi becomes absorbed in Samadhi.

The fifth step in Yōga is called Pratyahara, abstraction. It consists in withdrawing the senses from the external objects and absorbing them in the form of the mind stuff.

The sixth step is Dharana, concentration. It consists in holding the mind on some particular object either internal or external. By the practice of Pratyahara the senses are turned inward from their objects, by Dharana the withdrawn mind is fixed on one object in exclusion to others.

The seventh step is called Dhyana, meditation. It consists in the entire absorption of the mind in the object thought of to the extent of making it one with the object. This state is

attained by continuous and uninterrupted flow of the mind towards the object meditated upon.

The eighth and last step is Samadhi, superconsciousness. When the mind giving up all forms reflects only on the meaning of the object meditated upon it is said to be in Samadhi. Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi together constitute Samayama, control. When the Yogi masters Samyama he obtains the power of telling about past and future events. His knowledge then becomes infinite. The last three steps are closely related to each other—one that precedes leads to the one succeeding. Dharana means the holding of the mind on one object or one kind of object in exclusion of others. When that concentration becomes deep, steady, and uninterrupted it is called Dhyana. In this state the idea of the meditator (subject), the object meditated upon and the instrument of meditation is retained. When these three are merged into one consciousness it is called Samadhi; therefore Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi are the immediate stages leading to Kaivalya or oneness. In this state there is no duality or relativity, no "I" or "you," but one, absolute, eternal existence which is inexpressible by word and incomprehensible by thought. "When word with mind falls back, being unable to reach, realizing that oneness with Brahman, the Yogi becomes fearless, free and immortal." In this state of supreme realization the Jiva (individual soul) becomes Siva (Universal Soul).

There are two kinds of Samadhi—Samprajnata, i. e. Samadhi with an object, and Asamprajnata, Samadhi without an object. The Samprajnata Samadhi has four subdivisions—argumentative, deliberative, joyous and with false conceit. This Samadhi has for its object one or more of the

24 Tattvas (categories), or Isvara looked upon as one of the Purushas. The 24 Tattvas are unconscious, the 25th or Purusha is conscious. When meditation has something definite for its object it is called not only known or, as referred to the subject, knowing, but also Savija, literally with seed on which it can fix and from which it can develop. When meditation is carried on with reference to the five gross elements and the organs of the external perception it is called argumentative meditation. The same made the object of meditation without any argument as to the nature, relation, etc., is called non-argumentative meditation. When the five Tanmatras, the subtle cause of elements, are made the objects of meditation in the relation to space, time, etc., it is called deliberative meditation. The same, thought of without such relation, is called non-deliberative meditation. These two with their opposite as already stated constitute the cognition of things cognized.

When the Sattva element is meditated upon in the internal organ of perception to the subordination of the other two elements, Rajas and Tamas, it is Sananda or joyous, for joy is the result of Sattva; the cause that enables the senses to perform their functions is then experienced to its full. This meditation is called the cognition of the instrument of cognition. Those who stop at this state and do not reach the Purusha are called Videhas (free from the bonds of matter). The meditation of the ego is called Asmita or Samadhi with conceit. The consciousness of being only is retained in this Samadhi. This is called the cognition of the knower. One who has reached this stage is called a Prakritilaya, i. e. one dissolved in Prakriti; one who has not risen beyond it. The

fourth kind of this Samadhi or meditation has reference only to the knower, the third to the instruments of knowledge and the first and second to the known object. To put it otherwise: Meditation on some gross object as an idol or the form of some god is the first, i. e. argumentative. Meditation on the subtle cause of the gross form is the second, i. e. deliberative. Meditation on the instruments of knowledge, mind, intellect, etc., is the third, i. e. joyous; and meditation on the ego which is the cause of the other evolutes that have been described heretofore is the fourth or last, i. e. with conceit or with the sense of being. The Asamprajnata Samadhi is also called unconscious meditation. In this concentration, there is no particular consciousness of the knower or the known or the knowing. It is brought about by the practice of dispassion which is the cause of bringing the mind into a state of complete rest—a state in which all transformations are suspended or ended. The constant practice of this supreme non-attachment frees the mind even from the impressions left upon it by the kind of Samadhi already described as Samprajnata and fixes upon it its own stamp and holds it in permanent equilibrium. Samskara means impression, the mark left upon something by another thing. Now when supreme non-attachment sets its mark upon the mind and obliterates all previous impressions it is plain that the mind, having no other impression but that of non-attachment, must remain in a state of perfect equilibrium bordering upon vacuity and yet indescribably blissful. This state is called the state of perfect suspension of transformations which is real Yoga. This unconscious meditation, i. e. meditation in which there is no definite consciousness is called Nirvija (Void of seed). In this Samadhi the Yogi conquers death.

He is not born again but becomes eternally free and united with Brahman while still in the body.

The Yogi should be healthy, strong, active, energetic and pure. Yoga produces the wished-for results when it is practised with patience, perseverance and energy. The end of Yoga is peace and freedom and not the acquisition of occult powers. Powers belong to Prakṛiti. The Yogi should struggle to free himself from Prakṛiti. Prakṛiti is the cause of all bondage and misery. By practice and discrimination alone one can go beyond Prakṛiti. As mud cannot be washed away by mud, so by obtaining the powers of Prakṛiti no one can become free from Prakṛiti. The Yogi should have no desire for anything, however great it is; he must have tremendous faith in himself; he should find strength in himself, for true happiness, true freedom comes from within. "Everything that proceeds from self leads to happiness. Anything that comes from non-self is misery." 22-1340

Yoga should be practised in a place free from noise and tumult and other disturbances. The Yogi should observe moderation in every habit of life, such as diet, talk, work, etc. He must keep the place where he lives neat, clean and beautiful. He should keep in close touch with his teacher. No lesson should be practised arbitrarily. The teacher should be consulted whenever the aspirant finds any difficulty or doubt. If Yoga be practised under proper conditions, it is sure to produce the best and highest results. Nothing is higher than Yoga. "The fruits of merit that are declared in the scriptures in relation to sacrifices, austerities and charitable work—the Yogi who has known the truth, surpasses all and attains to the supreme, primeval abode."

OPINIONS ON VEDANTA

"This Vedanta, the Philosophy of the Upanishads, has been the first as well as the final thought that on the spiritual plane, has ever been vouchsafed unto Man. From this Light, have been going Westward and Eastward, from time to time, waves in the Ocean of the Vedanta."

—Swami Vivekananda.

"Vedanta is the most sublime of all philosophies and most comforting of all religions."

"Vedanta has room for almost every religion, nay, it embraces them all."

"If philosophy is meant to be a preparation for a happy death or Euthanasia, I know of no better preparation for it than the Vedanta Philosophy."—Prof. Max Muller.

"Both Thales and Parmenides were indeed anticipated by Hindu sages, and the Eleatic School seems to be a reflection of the Upanishads (Vedanta)."

—Prof. E. W. Hopkins.

"In the whole world no study is so beneficial and elevating as that of the Upanishads. It has been the solace of my life, it will be the solace of my death."

—Schopenhauer.

"Even the loftiest philosophy of the Europeans, the idealism of reason, as it is set forth by Greek Philosophers, appears, in comparison with the abundant light and vigor of Oriental Idealism (of Vedanta), like a feeble Promethean spark in the full flood of heavenly glory of the noonday sun—faltering and feeble and ever ready to be extinguished."—Frederick Schlegel.

"What humanity is to men, what existence is to living beings, that Vedanta is to all religions. It is their common essence, their inner unity and as such it can have no possible quarrel with any of them—the whole has no quarrel with the part."—*Prabuddha Bharata*, Vol. I.

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ANNOUNCEMENT

The Birthday Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda will be celebrated at the Vedanta Society on Sunday, February 7th. At eleven o'clock in the morning, Swami Bodhananda will deliver a sermon on "Vivekananda, His Message." In the evening at seven o'clock, a dinner will take place at the Ceylon India Inn, 148 West 49th Street, New York City. The Life and Work of the Master will be discussed by various speakers, among whom will be Swami Nikhilananda, of the Providence Vedanta Society and Mr. Dhan Gopal Mukerji.

The members of the Vedanta Society and all friends are most cordially invited to attend these functions.

VEDANTA DARPANA

OR

MIRROR OF VEDANTA

—o—

"Om Bhuh, Bhuvah, Swah:
We meditate upon that Adorable Light
of the Deva who is their Creator.
May He lead our thoughts to Him!"

Gayatri—the most Sacred
Hymn of the Vedas.

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No. 3

SELECTIONS FROM THE BHAGAVAD GITA CHAPTER I

The title of the first discourse is the "Sorrow of Arjuna." After reviewing the army of the enemy drawn in battle array and considering the imminence and danger of the war and its dire consequences, Arjuna's heart was overpowered with grief, anxiety, pity and despondency. Krishna was Arjuna's charioteer. When he drove the chariot to the front of the battle lines, and the soldiers of both armies had started to clash their weapons, Arjuna expressed his grief and fear and discomfiture to Krishna in words embodied in verses 28-45.

The reader of these verses can see clearly how under the spell of *Moha* (delusion) or the thought of "me and mine," Arjuna identified the Self with the non-self, lost confidence and courage and made himself despondent, distressful and dishonorable.

In support of his argument against war, Arjuna offered some reasons which, though they sounded quite plausible, were utterly absurd as unsuited to the time, place and circumstance of the occasion.

We shall discuss these reasons of Arjuna in the following issues. •

SRI RAMAKRISHNA

The Parable of the Fisherwoman and Flower Garden.

The mind of the worldly is like the beetle. The beetle loves to live in the cow dung; it does not like to live in any other element. It will feel very uneasy if you force it into a fragrant lotus. Similarly the worldly-minded do not care for anything else except a talk about worldly things. They will leave the place where people are found talking about God and matters spiritual, and find peace in a place where idle gossip is going on.

Once a fisherwoman on her way home from the fish market was overtaken by a storm at nightfall; so she took refuge in a florist's house. The florist received her very kindly and allowed her to pass the night on the porch adjoining the room in which he kept his flowers. But, although thus comfortably lodged, she could not get a wink of sleep. At last she discovered that the sweet aroma of the flowers in the garden was what had kept her awake. She, therefore, sprinkled some water on her empty fish basket and placed it close to her nose. In a short time she fell into a sound sleep. Similar is the case with the worldly minded. They too relish nothing else except the foul smell of the putrid things of the world.

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EXTRACTS FROM A LECTURE

By SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

Well, then, the human soul is eternal and immortal, perfect and infinite, and death means 'only a change of centre from one body to another. The present is determined by our past actions, and the future by the present. The soul will go on evolving up and reverting back from birth to birth and death to death. But there is another question: Is man a tiny boat in a tempest, raised one moment on the foamy crest of a billow and dashed down into a yawning chasm the next, rolling to and fro at the mercy of good and bad actions—a powerless, helpless wreck in an ever-raging, ever-rushing, uncompromising current of cause and effect; a little moth placed under the wheel of causation, which rolls on crushing everything in its way, and waits not for the widow's tears or the orphan's cry? The heart sinks at the idea, yet this is the law of nature. Is there no hope? Is there no escape? — was the cry that went up from the bottom of the heart of despair. It reached the throne of mercy, and words of hope and consolation came down and inspired a Vedic sage, and he stood up before the world and in a trumpet voice proclaimed the glad tidings: "Hear, ye children of immortal bliss! Even ye that reside in higher spheres! I have found the Ancient One who is beyond all darkness, all delusion. 'Knowing Him alone you shall be saved from death over again."

"Children of immortal bliss" — what a sweet, what a hopeful name! Allow me to call you, brethren, by that sweet name — heirs of immortal bliss; — yea, the Hindu refuses to call you sinners. Ye are the children of God, the sharers of immortal bliss, holy and perfect beings. Ye

divinities on earth, — sinners? It is sin to call a man so; it is a standing libel on human nature. Come up, O lions, and shake off the delusion that you are sheep; you are souls immortal, spirits free, blest and eternal. Ye are not matter, ye are not bodies. Matter is your servant, not you the servant of matter.

Thus it is that the Vedas proclaim not a dreadful combination of unforgiving laws, not an endless prison of cause and effect, but that at the head of all these laws, in and through every particle of matter and force stands One, "By whose command the wind blows, the fire burns, the clouds rain and death stalks upon the earth."

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THE SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS OF THE MAHABHARATA

By the Editor

The Mahabharata is the greatest epic of the world. It is great both in size and substance. The Mahabharata contains one hundred thousand verses and thus it is seven times as large as Homer's "Iliad" and "Odyssey" put together. And the spiritual thoughts of the Mahabharata are supremely wonderful. The word Mahabharata means "Great India." There lived in ancient times a king by the name of Bharata, and according to tradition, he was the son of Sakuntala, the heroine of Kalidāsa's great drama. Since his time this most ancient and historic land has been known by the name of Bhārata-Varsha—the land of Bharata.

India attained the very zenith of her power and glory and civilization during the time of which the Mahabharata is a narrative. The age of the Mahabharata is very difficult to settle. According to some scholars the Mahabharata was

committed to writing about fifteen hundred years before Christ. But the story was transmitted orally for several generations before that. That is, the teacher taught the story of the Mahabharata to his disciple and he taught it in his own turn to his disciple, and in this way it came down for several generations before it was put into writing in the fifteenth century before Christ.

In my last lecture I described briefly the other great Hindoo epic, the Ramayana. These two are the two great heritages of the Hindoo people. There are today more than two hundred million Hindoos in India, and if you ask any Hindoo, cultured or ignorant, about these great epics, he will tell you something about them. Go to a village and if you find a village oil-mill owner or a confectioner, you will find him in the afternoon sitting right in his shop surrounded by some earnest listeners and spelling out an imperfect translation of the Mahabharata or the Ramayana, of course in the dialect of his province; and if you ask him about Rama and Sita, or Krishna and Arjuna, he will tell you all about them.

During the period between 2000 B.C. and 1000 B.C. India possessed many universities, in fact, that was the most cultured age in the history of India. The language of the Vedas was too difficult for the ordinary man or woman to understand, and in order to teach the Vedic truths in a simpler language these two epics were composed. In and through them you will find the substance of all Hindoo systems of philosophy. For instance, in the Mahabharata, the instructions of Bhishma to Yudhishthira, or of Krishna to Arjuna, are nothing but the essence of the philosophies.

You will not find one Hindoo into whose life the stories of the Mahabharata and the Ramāyana have not been firmly rooted.

The heroes of the Mahabharata are characters in flesh and blood with human virtues and vices. That is, as a heroic epic, the Mahabharata stands at a higher level than the Ramayana. But the characters of the Ramayana are characters of ideals, such as piety, faithfulness, duty, etc., and these characters have been delineated with a very soft and delicate art. Thus the language of the Ramayana is very different from the language of the Mahabharata, although as I have already told you, the style of both Ramayana and Mahabharata is very simple. In fact the poets have avoided the use of metaphors and similes—all figures of speech. The great moral purpose of these two poems is to describe the triumph of virtue over vice, or the triumph of truth over untruth. The tenor of the Ramayana is calm and subdued, full of pathos and devotion, and the tenor of the Mahabharata is spirited and warlike. So I leave it to you to determine which of these two epics is the higher. Of course, as a Hindoo, I bow to both of them. I have the same respect for both the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, and the characters they have described. The spiritual significance of both are supreme.

The Mahabharata was originally composed by the great poet Vyasa. He also compiled the Vedas. Therefore sometimes he is called Veda-Vyasa, the compiler of the Vedas. The four books of the Vedas arranged by this sage are: Rig-Veda, Yajur-Veda, Sama-Veda and Atharva-Veda. He taught the original Mahabharata, that is his own poem, to his son Suka, and Suka told the story of it to his disciple

VEDANTA DARPAṆA

Vaisampayana. Once a king belonging to the lunar dynasty performed a great sacrifice and a sage by the name of Sauti happened to be present at that sacrifice and listened to the recitation of the Mahabharata by Vaisampayana, and after that sacrifice was over he started on a pilgrimage. In the course of his wanderings he came to a forest retreat where many sages were living. The name of this retreat was Naimisaranya, the forest of Nimisha. It was a sort of conclave, an assemblage of learned scholars, and this sage Sauti, in several discourses, gave an account of this Mahabharata which he had heard from Vaisampayana at that great sacrifice. So you see the story of the Mahabharata as we have it today is the fourth-hand report of the original by the sage Vyasa.

Manu was the first ancestor of the two great races or dynasties of kings, the solar dynasty and the lunar dynasty. He had a son by the name of Ikshaku, who was the first parent of the kings of the solar dynasty. Manu's daughter, Ila, was the first princess of the lunar dynasty and all the kings of the Mahabharata belonged to this latter dynasty—the lunar. Dhritarashtra and Pandu were two brothers, both princes, but Dhritarashtra was born blind and on account of that physical deformity, he, although he was the eldest son, did not become king. His younger brother, Pandu, reigned in his place. Pandu died when he was young. His five sons were brought up in the family of Dhritarashtra with their cousins. Naturally Yudhishthira, who was the oldest of all these princes, was declared heir apparent, and the eldest son of this blind king, named Duryodhana, became very jealous of him. There we find an instance of the many human qualities that characterize

the heroes of this epic. He started a conspiracy to destroy Yudhishthira and his virtuous brothers, inducing them to visit a house made up of inflammable substances, which was situated in a village by the name of Varanavata. 'Yudhishthira and his brothers went there without any suspicion, but their great friend Krishna gave them an indirect warning about this house before they left their palace. Instead of spending the first night in it, they stayed outside. The house was burned up, as Duryodhana had engaged a man to set it on fire. But the plot failed as his cousins escaped. He had the notion that they were all killed in the fire.

During several years the sons of Pandu stayed in disguise. Of course all that period Duryodhana believed they existed no longer. Then there was a great Swayamvara (choice marriage) of a princess, the daughter of the king of Panchala. Her name was Draupadi, and all the princes of India were invited to be present and try their luck in the contest. Duryodhana himself went, and these five brothers were also present, but they were still in disguise. The condition of that contest was that whichever of the assembled princes succeeded in piercing with an arrow the eye of a fish suspended several hundred feet above the earth, first passing it through a very narrow hole in a discus hanging below the fish, he would win the princess as his bride. All those princes rose in turn, but their arrows struck the discus, and they all failed to pierce the eye of the fish. Even Bhishma, who was considered in his own time the greatest of archers, failed. Drona, another great archer, failed. Then the king's son, Dhristadyumna, announced that, as the princes had all failed to prove their skill in archery according to the terms of the contest, therefore, anyone present,

whether he were a Brahman or a Kshatriya or even a Shudra, would become Draupadi's husband if he could shoot the eye of the fish through this narrow hole in the discus. Then Arjuna, with Yudhisthira's permission, stepped forward with his bow, but all the princes present laughed at him, saying, "When such great heroes as Bhishma and Drona have failed, how could this poor man perform the deed!" Now in the midst of all those taunts and abuses, Arjuna made his attempt. The story says that when he used the bow and arrow, Krishna moved away the discus under the fish and it became very easy for him to shoot the eye of the fish. Of course, the assembled people did not know that Krishna did that by his Yoga power. Thus Arjuna won the contest, and princess Draupadi became his bride.

A very strange incident happened after Arjuna won Draupadi. He and his brothers returned to their mother, and before they had come close to her, Arjuna said: "Mother we have brought a gift for you." Then the mother said, before she had seen the gift, "enjoy that gift among yourselves." From that the brothers construed that she wished Draupadi to become their common wife. Although this was a most singular instance, because that is a sort of polyandry which never existed in India, they all married her in order to carry out the wish of their mother. But she was the Queen of Yudhisthira. Then Duryodhana found out that his cousins were not destroyed in the fire. They returned and the kingdom was divided between these two branches of cousins, Duryodhana keeping half of the state, and Yudhisthira becoming ruler of the other half. Yudhisthira made his capital at Hastinapore, north of modern Delhi. After that he performed a great sacrifice, and he

invited all the rulers and chiefs of India of that time to this sacrifice. Duryodhana came, but was more jealous of Yudhishthira and his fame for his virtues.

On returning to his capital, Duryodhana contrived another plot to dethrone and destroy his cousins. Yudhishthira, with all his virtues had a great weakness. He was very fond of gambling, and Duryodhana had an uncle, his mother's brother, who was an expert at throwing false dice. He invited him to this game of dice, and when this challenge came from Duryodhana, Yudhishthira considered it a point of honor to accept it, and went to the court of Duryodhana, but he lost everything. First he staked himself and lost, then his brothers, then his servants, then his kingdom and finally the queen Draupadi herself. He lost them all, one after the other; I shall not take your time to describe that scene. It was a great humiliation to the Pandavas. But because Yudhishthira was a very wise and virtuous man, he calmly suffered all those insults and indignities from his cousins. After losing his kingdom he had to leave it for twelve years. During that period, Yudhishthira and his brothers and Draupadi traveled through the forests. This particular book of the Mahabharata is called Vana Parva, literally, the Forest Book. During these wanderings they visited many hermitages and heard many interesting and instructive discourses from the saints. In fact, this particular book of the Mahabharata, the third book, is famous for those beautiful narratives, and later I will relate at least two or three of them to you.

Then Yudhishthira returns home, after his period of exile, and during that time of his absence from the kingdom, Duryodhana naturally appropriated his part of the king-

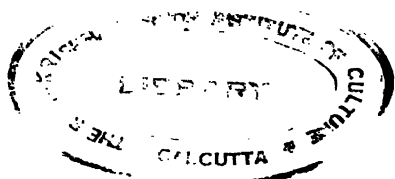
dom also. The condition of the exile was that after twelve years, on his return, Yudhishthira's kingdom would be restored to him. But Duryodhana refused to do this. On learning this determination from Duryodhana, Krishna, who was a relative of the family, went to the court of Duryodhana and proposed an amicable settlement. Krishna suggested that Duryodhana give five small towns to his five cousins, but Duryodhana said that without fight he would not grant them "as much land as could be covered by the point of a needle." Now Krishna returned to Yudhishthira and told him what had happened, and that he had discovered during the course of these negotiations that Duryodhana was a most wicked man, and suggested, particularly to Arjuna, not to accept this humiliation but to fight and win back the lost kingdom. That is, the counselor of this war was Krishna himself. I want to tell you another thing by way of digression, rather. All the princes of this family were taught in archery by the great preceptor, Drona. When they were young, with the permission of the blind king, Dhritarashtra, Drona once arranged a tournament, a sort of mock fight, but all these princes became so heated in that fight that it turned into a regular war. There were two of them who as rivals were most jealous of each other in that tournament, Arjuna, and Karna. In fact this rivalry between Karna and Arjuna was one of the causes of this war. Here we find a similarity between the heroes of the Iliad and the heroes of the Mahabharata. In the first place, some of the heroes of the Mahabharata, those five brothers, were men like Homer's Agamemnon and Achilles; and the rivalry between Arjuna and Karna was very much like that between Achilles and Hector.

When Krishna advised Arjuna to engage in this war, his main object was to establish peace and order once more in that kingdom, because so long as Duryodhana remained and reigned there could be none. So that innocent subjects might enjoy once again prosperity, peace and happiness, Krishna exhorted Arjuna to engage in this war which is known as Dharma Yuddha—righteous war—because the issues of the war rested upon justice, order and peace. Metaphysically, this was a war between virtue and vice. In the first book of the Mahabharata itself, these two parties are represented metaphorically by two trees: Yudhisthira is the tree of virtue, or truth, whose trunk is Arjuna and root Krishna, Bhima is the branch and the twins Nakula and Sahadeva the fruits and flowers. The other tree is represented by Duryodhana, and is called the tree of vice. The root of that tree is the blind king, Dhritarashtra, the trunk is Karna, the branch Sakuni; and Duhshasana and other brothers of Duryodhana are flowers and fruits. According to some scholars this war which is described in the Mahabharata was not an actual war fought in the field by the armies of Arjuna and Duryodhana, but instead is the internal war, the war between the two natures of man—the higher nature and the lower nature. In the long run the higher nature triumphs over the lower nature; virtue triumphs over vice—truth over error. ✍

Then we find the teachings of the Gita. It is an episode in the sixth book of the Mahabharata. Bhishma was the generalissimo or chief commander of the army of Duryodhana. Duryodhana had about 100,000 men in his army and Yudhisthira about 70,000 men. Krishna, who was a prince himself, asked both Arjuna and Duryodhana (the

two great leaders) before the commencement of the war, who would have him as friend and counselor and who his army. Duryodhana, being of the quality of rajas, preferred the army to Krishna himself; Arjuna, who was Satvika by nature, chose Krishna, because to Arjuna, Krishna himself was much stronger than a large army; but to Duryodhana, the army was stronger than Krishna. So you see Krishna was absolutely impartial in that war. Of course he wanted to destroy this force of evil, this power of unrighteousness which Duryodhana impersonated. He heartily wished this, and its expression we can find very clearly in his utterances in the Gita.

This war lasted eighteen days. ¹ ² Bhishma conducted it the first ten days and on the eleventh day he fell. Of course he did not die. Bhishma was a great sage; he had the power to die by will. There were some astronomical conditions which were not very favorable and he waited six months on his bed of arrows for the right time to come for departure. Although he suffered tremendously, still he waited patiently for that auspicious time. During those six months, although he fought on the side of Duryodhana, Bhishma gave some very helpful instructions to Yudhis-thira—as to the right performance of duties as a citizen, as a ruler, as a father, as a husband, etc. Then Drona, who was the common preceptor of all these princes, conducted this war, taking the place of Bhishma. He served for five days as leader. Then Karna became the commander, conducting the army for two days. Here we find the climax of the story of the Mahabharata. That is, the rivalry which was the latent cause of this war, the rivalry between Arjuna and Karna, now reached its culmination. Karna proved a



match for Arjuna in prowess and military manœuvres, but the poet, by a very beautiful stroke of imagery, makes Karna die of accident. Thus if Karna had not met with that accident, he might have proven not only a match for Arjuna, but he might have defeated and killed him. There we find the drama and beauty of poetry itself. That in fact finishes this war. Of course the conflict lasted two more days, until finally Duryodhana himself was killed and there was peace; but this was only after the death of most of the leading kings, rulers, princes and chiefs who had taken part on either one side or the other.

Although Yudhisthira became king after winning the war, he was not happy in his conscience, and abdicated the kingdom in favor of a grandson of Arjuna, named Parikkhita. Then Yudhisthira, his brothers and Draupadi retired, six in all, and the story says that they ascended heaven in flesh and blood. Dharma — righteousness, assumed the body of a dog and accompanied them. This dog was the pathfinder. Sometimes the dogs can lead; they know the way. When this party reached the gate of heaven they were allowed to enter, excepting the dog; but Yudhisthira said: "This dog is my faithful companion. If he is not allowed to enter, I will not enter this place." But afterwards the truth was known, and that again proved Yudhisthira's own faithfulness. Arjuna's grandson reigned for many years, perhaps fifty years, and then after his death his son, Janmejaya, succeeded him to the throne.

This sage Sauti heard this epic of the Mahabharata from Vaisampayana, who expounded it at that great sacrifice which Janmejaya had performed.

I shall now relate to you one or two of the stories of

the Vana Parva, the third book of the Epic. There lived a king, called Sivi, who was famous for his charity. One day, to test his charity, two gods, Indra and Agni, in the forms of a pigeon and a hawk, respectively, flew to this king. Of course they made a sort of conspiracy. This pigeon is followed by the hawk and comes to the king, begging his protection. Instantly the hawk arrives. The pigeon says: "I am followed by this hawk. He wants to kill me, and you will have to protect me." Then the hawk says: "I am tired and exhausted, and if I cannot get some meat to eat I shall die. This pigeon belongs to me. I have chased him all this way and I must eat his flesh." The king fell into a dilemma; he did not know what to do; he would have to save the one or the other. Then he says to the hawk: "I have ordered meat for you. It will be immediately served." To this the hawk replies: "I do not want any other meat but the meat of this pigeon; but if you can give your own flesh equal in weight to the pigeon, I can accept that." Then the servant brings the scale. The king cuts out a piece of flesh from his arm, but the pigeon outweighs it. He takes another piece and still another, but even then the pigeon outweighs it. He then gives up his whole body to the hawk to eat. Finally these two gods, who assumed the form of these two birds, reveal their identity and say: "We are satisfied with your charity; you are a real sacrificer."

The next is the story of the chaste woman. This woman was devoted to her duties, and one day a sage came to the house while she was engaged in some household work. When the sage knocked at the door she did not open it, and the sage became angry. Sometime before that he sat under a

tree, and on the top of that tree two birds were making a noise, and when he cast his angry gaze upon them, they were burned to ashes. After waiting longer, he threatened that woman, but, she said: "I do not think I am a bird which you can burn with your angry gaze. You cannot hurt me." When the sage heard that, he was surprised and asked how she knew that. She said: "All things come to me. I am not a Yogi, I am not a sage like you, but because I perform my duties rightly I know all those things." Then this woman sent this Yogi to a butcher who was a very righteous man, and this butcher, at his meat shop, gave him some instructions in real Yoga.

The two other stories which I have no time to describe now, occur in the same book of the Mahbharata. Please read them yourself. One is the story of a King and a Queen — Nala and Damayanti. There we find another instance, of constancy, of conjugal love. The king and queen were separated for several years. Nala lost his kingdom and became a groom of another king, and the queen became a maidservant in a house, but finally they were united again.

The other story describes how Savitri, a chaste, devoted wife by her pure love, brought back to life her dead husband — Satyavan. It shows how we can conquer death by love.

The poet concludes the epic by declaring that the readers and the hearers of the Mahbharata all become pure and spiritual and at their homes prevail prosperity, health, happiness and peace. So that is the result of the study, and also the hearing of the story, of this great Sanskrit Epic, the Holy Mahabharata.

VEDANTA D'ARPANA

OR

MIRROR OF VEDANTA

—oOo—

"Om Bhuh, Bhuvah, Swah:

*We meditate upon that Adorable Light
of the Deva who is their Creator.*

May He lead our thoughts to Him!"

*Gayatri—the most Sacred
Hymn of the Vedas.*

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SELECTIONS FROM THE BHAGAVAD GITA

With Explanation

CHAPTER I.

Two great reasons urged by Arjuna against war were:
(1) that the soldier incurs a great sin by killing lives; and
(2) that the destroyer of lives and property never enjoys happiness afterwards, even if he wins the war.

The cause of Arjuna's unwillingness to engage in battle at that critical time is not difficult to discern. After beholding the armies he said to Krishna: "Seeing these kinsmen assembled eager to fight my limbs fail me, by mouth dries up, my body is shaking and my hair stands on end. The bow Gandiva slips from my hand and my skin is burning."

All these were symptoms of nervousness. But instead of confessing his weakness to Krishna, he advanced these commonplace reasons against war and advocated mercy and forgiveness. Arjuna knew full well that in war the killing of lives is unavoidable. He also knew that the murder of men even in war is sinful and that the slayer of lives is never happy during the remainder of his life. Why then did he undertake to fight at all? The decision was arrived at after long and careful deliberations and he was present at them all. He became unnerved at the sight of the actual war. It was a clear case of stage fright.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA ON REALIZATION OF GOD

God can be realized by the purified heart alone. Ordinarily the mind is stained with worldliness. The mind may be compared to a needle. If a needle be covered with thick mud, it is not attracted by the magnet; but when the mud is washed off, the magnet attracts it. Similarly, when the mind is covered with the mud of worldliness, it does not feel the attraction of the Lord; but whosoever repents, saying: "O Lord, I shall never again commit such an act," and sheds tears of true repentance, washes off all impurities, and the magnet of the Lord then attracts the needle of his mind. Instantly superconsciousness comes and is followed by God-vision.

Worldly people say that it is impossible to be free from attachment to worldliness. But when God is attained, all worldly attachment vanishes. After realizing the absolute bliss of God-consciousness one cannot enjoy sense-pleasures or run after fame, honour or any worldly object. Moths after once seeing the light do not return to the darkness. As much as one thinks of God and meditates on Him, by so much will one lose one's taste for worldly pleasures. As much as one's love and devotion for God increases, by so much will diminish worldly desires and care for the body. Then one will look upon every woman as mother, upon his own wife as a spiritual helpmate; all animal passions will disappear. Divine spirituality will come, and non-attachment to the world; then one will become absolutely emancipated even in this life. •

AN APPRECIATION OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

By SWAMI NIKHILANANDA

(An address delivered at the Vedanta Society of New York,
on Swami Vivekananda's Birthday Anniversary)

Dear Friends: It gives me the greatest pleasure to meet you here this morning. We are here this morning not to pay our respects to a great statesman; not to pay our respects to a great diplomat; not to pay our respects to a business magnate; not to pay our respects to a general. We are assembled here this morning to pay our respects to a man who was a monk; a man who had no persons in the world to call his own. He was a beggar, physically speaking. Christ said: "The foxes have^o their holes, the birds have their nests, but the son of man hath not where to lay his head." Swami Vivekananda belonged to that class and I am happy to see that so many friends have so eagerly come here to offer their homage to that great spiritual leader.

Forty years ago when he came to this country, the situation was quite different.³ One day while Swami Vivekananda was visiting a city he passed a group of young boys who were playing. When they saw him they were amused to see that quaint man in his quaint dress—he wore a turban on his head. They left their play and stood around him. Swami Vivekananda asked them: "What are you looking at?" The leader said: "Ooh, and it speaks too!" That was the idea about the Hindu at that time in this country and today we have so many friends, so many admirers, so many societies disseminating the truth of Vedanta. It is a great thing.

Nowadays many so-called educated people think that religion is a sort of opium of life. It takes away our energy; it takes away our activities; it makes us sleepy; it makes us indifferent to all interests of life. Therefore religion should be banished, and following this opinion in some countries of the world like Russia and Turkey, they are going to do so. University-bred men and women are delighted to avoid it.

I feel that the greatest progress the world has made from time to time has been made by religion; not only in the field of thinking, not only in the field of higher emotions, but in material walks of life as well. If you take into consideration the history of western civilization and if you take away from it the teachings of Christ, what remains there? Nothing, practically speaking. The best expression of art, the best expression of literature in European history, the best and noblest idea of philanthropy and charity have come from the teachings of Christ. If you take away the life and example of that great man, you became like a pack of wolves scratching out each other's eyes. If you remove the religious ideal, nature assumes a hideous form.

Another impetus to the western civilization and culture was given in the 16th century by the religious leader, Martin Luther, when he initiated another religious Bible. The first settlers who came to this country were inspired by religious ideals. They left their mother country and colonized this country. Take into consideration the history of India from the earliest time. You will find that not only religious thinking but intellectual and social thinking came from religious men. Whatever progress we have made in India

during the last two thousand years—and if you trace its history—you will find we owe a good deal of it to Buddha. Buddha, the great man of renunciation, said: "Can one conquer evil by evil? One cannot conquer evil by evil, but evil by love; one cannot conquer hatred by hatred, but hatred by love." In the wake of Buddhism in India, there followed material progress in all departments of life—art, science, medicine and literature.

Another such awakening has dawned after the birth of Swami Vivekananda, for we find a greater spiritual and social consciousness in India following in the wake of his teachings. If you look over India today, you will find an apostle of renunciation, a man of great spirituality, is guiding the whole national movement, with the Gita in his hand. It is possible, no doubt, that the son of man came. Christ said: "You cannot worship both God and Mammon together." He said: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the gate of Heaven." Buddha said: "Unless you kill all your desires you cannot have immortality." Sankara came and said: "The world is an illusion, Brahman alone is true." Rama Krishna said: "Unless you give up lust and greed you cannot realize the truth." These are men who have dreamed of a heavenly kingdom. How is it that in their wake has followed this wonderful progress in all departments of life?

What is religion? What do the spiritual people perform? They liberate the immortal spirit that is lying within us. Religion means spirituality; religion means the manifestation of the divinity that is already in man. That is the infinite strength; infinite glory; infinite greatness; infinite majesty. The difference between man and man is this:

Great men on this earth are conscious of this immortal power, and you and I are not conscious of it. That spirit manifests through various departments in life. If you are a scientist and if you are aware of that great power in you, you will be a greater scientist. If you are a sage, with that knowledge you will be a greater sage. Therefore we find that in the pursuit and renaissance of religion always comes success, not only in the field of religion, in the field of philosophy, but in the material departments of life as well.

Swami Vivekananda came at a psychological moment. The nineteenth century was a time when people shuddered at the idea of religion, when materialism was the guiding motive in every department of life. At that time Swami Vivekananda came and when I speak of Swami Vivekananda I cannot but mention to you the name of his great teacher, Sri Ramakrishna, the brightest star that shone in the spiritual firmament of the world in the nineteenth century. He tested and proved all the spiritual methods of his time, and was wishing for an instrument who would be able to deliver his message to the hungry humanity. As a young man Swami Vivekananda was given much to meditation; he was very eager to realize truth, but the idea of God as described in the scriptures and preached from the pulpits, did not satisfy him at all. He wanted to go out. He was eager to learn of that God, not from books or from empty dogmas or meaningless customs, but from a man who had realized God himself. So he came to Sri Ramakrishna and asked him: "Have you seen God?" He answered: "Oh, my dear boy, I have seen God; I see God as I see you, perhaps more intensely; I have talked

to God as I am talking to you." "But," he said, "who wants to see, to realize, to talk to God? People shed oceans of tears for money. ⁹ They spend sleepless nights that way, but can you show me a man who has wept for God for three days and has not seen God?" Swami Vivekananda was struck by these words and said later on that spiritual treasure can be transmitted in a most tangible form. As you pass a bouquet of flowers, so can spirituality be passed from one to another. Wonderful was his life. Time will not permit me here to talk of those startling incidents, but I will give you one incident which will give you an idea of that wonderful spirituality—that renunciation.

Swami Vivekananda was passing through a period of spiritual unrest when his father died. He had no money left him. He often went out thinking how he could get some food for his mother and younger brothers. He came to Sri Ramakrishna and said: "I can no longer bear the sight of my starving mother and brothers at home. Can you do something so that I can get a little money?" Sri Ramakrishna said: "Today is a very auspicious day; go to the temple and pray to the Divine Mother who is in the temple and whatever you ask of her she will grant unto you." Swami Vivekananda went into the temple and when he looked at the image of the Divine Mother he found her so much alive, pulsating with life, radiating joy and peace, that he did not wish to pray for material things. He thought it would be too insignificant to ask the Divine Mother for food or clothing when there were so many other good things he could get. He thought within himself: If I could get spiritual things like renunciation, why

should I ask for worldly goods? If you stumble in a diamond mine and see a few glass beads there, would you take the beads instead of the diamonds? So, he said, "give me purity."

He returned to Sri Ramakrishna, who enquired about his prayer and its fulfilment. He said, I forgot to ask for material things. I asked for spirituality. Sri Ramakrishna sent him back to the Divine Mother. Again he went and returned the same way. He tried twice, but could not pray for those things. That shows his love of Truth and Purity.

Several years after the passing of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda came to this country and addressed that historic meeting in Chicago. I feel that Swami Vivekananda was the first man who made the platform where east and west could meet. East and west may not meet on the platform of materialism, but east and west can meet and must meet on the platform of spirituality. In spite of our spiritual ideas in India we have not solved all the problems of life. You will find in India ignorance, poverty, uncleanness, sickness, etc. We have not solved our problems; you have not solved your problems either. In spite of all progress you have not been able to solve the highest spiritual problem. You see so much discontent everywhere. I was reading in the paper about the number of suicides in the United States; I read the report of the physicians that in the hospitals every other bed contains a patient who has developed some form of insanity. So you have not solved your problem. Let us all meet and solve the problems of the world. Swami Vivekananda

used to say, like a very bold prophet, "I do not wish to Christianize the world; I do not like to Hinduize the world; I want to my-ize the world." He wants everyone of us to stand on the immortal rock—God within our very self. Everyone of those you see around you has been created after the image of God. "Thou art the man; Thou art the woman; Thou art the son; Thou art the daughter; Thou art all. Thou art working with all hands, seeing with all eyes, hearing with all ears."

Swami Vivekananda gave us this message from his great master, Sri Ramakrishna. Swami Vivekananda asked Sri Ramakrishna a favor. It was that he might go into Samadhi, into deep meditation, and could taste the bliss of God uninterruptedly, and after four or five days return to the normal state. He answered: "You are a fool. Why are you so anxious to see God with your eyes closed? Can't you see Him with your eyes open? Is He not around you in the form of the diseased, the poor and the starving? By serving them you will serve God. When a beggar comes to you, you should love him and worship him, because it is God who has come to you in that form." That was the method of service of God which Swami Vivekananda got from his teacher. From that we derive a new inspiration, we understand that God can be realized in the form of a peasant as well as in the form of a saint. There we get an idea of how the secular and the sacred can be reconciled. The duty to our father, mother, wife, child and country can be combined with our duty towards God. If we can understand the manifestation of divinity—everywhere in all things and beings, then all religions become

so many pathways of approach to the one and the same goal.

I arrived from India only a few months ago. One thing that strikes me greatly in this country is the wonderful craving for liberty, for freedom, for independence. You people here on this side of the world do not really know what bondage is. Being guided and goaded by that desire for freedom you have conquered the land, you have conquered the water and the air. In this material world, in nature, there are but few things which you have not conquered; but there is another—if you can conquer that, you will gain access to the whole world—the realm of the spirit. The world is starving today. Everywhere you find the cry of the weak in spite of all our strength, our muscle; in spite of all our material resources, we are really poor. That scarlet color in Europe's sky today is not the sign of a beautiful dawn, it is not the sign of a sunrise, it is the leaping flame of a sepulchre, which means another war, which means the destruction of civilization. It is for you living on this side of the world who have before you the example of a noble line of thinkers, like Lincoln, to give a new leader to the world who can conquer the spirit. With hatred towards none, with malice towards none, with good will to all, let us proceed to the conquest of that spiritual world and realize that immortality which is ours.

* * * * *

VIVEKANANDA—THE MAN AND MASTER**BY THE EDITOR**

Swami Vivekananda was born in India, but he belonged to the world. He lived on this earth for forty years, but in what he had achieved he lived a life of four hundred years.

"We live in deeds, not in years;
In thoughts, not in breaths. In feelings,
Not in figures on a dial.
We should count life by heart throbs.
He most lives, who thinks most,
Feels the noblest and acts the best."

The real Vivekananda is yet to come. "By such ones," it is said in the scriptures, "the family is blest, the community is blest, the country is blest—nay, the whole world is blest." It is meet and proper, therefore, that we should gather together this morning to pay our homage to this great man, this great master, in the season of the year he was born.

Swami Vivekananda, was a man, of versatile genius; he was an athlete, a musician, a poet, an orator; he was a philosopher, a patriot and a great Yogi. I can still remember the day when I first saw him. I was then too small to be introduced to him. That was in the year 1886, either before the passing of his master, Sri Ramakrishna, or shortly after that. He was then Headmaster of a school and I had the great privilege to be a student in that school. He accepted that position for only a few months, perhaps a few weeks. I used to see him from the window of our class room. I was then about fifteen years old. To me

he appeared to be an eminently super-man, although I knew nothing of him then, but the mere personality, the sparkling eyes—the nonchallant yet graceful movement—produced that impression upon me. Every morning I used to watch him when he entered the school compound. In fact, he captivated me, although I never had known about him. In the year 1890 I came in contact with the Swamis of the Sri Ramakrishna order. After Sri Ramakrishna's passing Swami Vivekananda became leader of the followers of Sri Ramakrishna. They lived in a rented house in a suburb of Calcutta, about four miles to the north, and it was such a dilapidated house that nobody cared to rent it and live in it. • Many had the notion that it was a haunted house. Anyhow, these brave monks rented that house and lived there unmolested by thieves or ghosts or beasts. That year Swami Vivekananda was not there; he was then traveling. Most probably he was making a pilgrimage to Kedarnath and Vadri, the temples in the Himalayas. In fact, he was living incognito, no one knew what part of India he was visiting. •

He left India in 1893 to represent the religious philosophy of Vedanta at the Parliament of Religions held in Chicago. He lived in this country for four years. In December 1896 he returned to India. In the beginning of 1897, just a few weeks after his arrival, I met him. That was the time for the celebration of the anniversary of the birth of Sri Ramakrishna. It was February; Swami Vivekananda was then living in a house belonging to a rich man, on the bank of the Ganges. The monastery was about three miles further north. Just the day before this anniversary I went there and spent the night, and early in

the morning, about five o'clock, I left the monastery to see Swami Vivekananda. I walked all the way—three miles—and when I arrived there it was about six, and I saw him standing near the window. He was an early riser. He saw me from the window more clearly than I could see him, and when I approached the house he came down quietly from the second floor and opened the door, saying that he did not want to trouble the others. When I saluted him he said: "My son, I am glad you came." In a general way the other Swamis might have told him that some young men came to them and that they had planned to live the monastic life. From that I think he guessed that I was one of that group and, of course, his guess was correct. He said: "I want to wash my mouth, please fetch me a pitcher of water. Will you stay and have breakfast with me?" I answered: "We are not accustomed to having breakfast." Then he said: "You can have a cup of coffee," and I replied: "I do not care for coffee, but I will stay." Shortly after, we went to the monastery. On arriving there he took his bath and gave initiations to some disciples. About 11 o'clock I left the monastery and came to the temple garden where Sri Ramakrishna had lived, and the anniversary was being held. There were about fifty thousand people there at that time and another fifty thousand came later :

The chief cause of attraction was Swami Vivekananda's presence. He had not been there for seven or eight years and all these people came to have the opportunity to see him. But the crowd, by one o'clock, grew so dense that we could not move: We had to hire a carriage and bring

Swami Vivekananda back to the monastery. It was quite warm then, although it was the last week of February, perhaps. Then I had the great privilege to be with him all that afternoon. The next morning I had to come home.

To make a long story short, in the year 1899, two years afterwards, I left home and came to live in the monastery and then he gave me the initiation. I can still remember the day before this took place. In order to test my faithfulness he said: "Suppose I asked you to go to the river and catch a crocodile, can you do that? Or, if I should ask you to go to the mouth of the cannon, will you do that? Suppose tomorrow I become a very vicious man, will you still love me?"

Of course, I considered these questions a few moments and then said: "Swamiji, if you ever order me to go to the mouth of the cannon—I may be stimulated to do so, but if you order me at this moment I could not do that." He said: "I am glad you said that. I know you are not impulsive." In answer to the other question, I said: "I do not care to examine your qualities, but I love you and I think I will continue to love you, even if the other thing happens." He was a wonderful personality, in every inch he was a king. Then, intellectually and in compassion he was a super-man in the truest sense of the term.

Friends, I think I have told you many times that I am a little skeptical about supersensuous realities or hypothetical propositions like the existence of the soul after death or of God. It is not that I do not believe in those truths, but I have not realized them. They are rather hypotheses to

me. If you asked me if I believed in God, to be absolutely truthful I would say, "there may be a God, but I have not yet found him." If there are people who believe in God or if there are people who say they have seen or met God, I have no objections to their assertions. I will always say, "I do not know, perhaps there is, perhaps there is not."

I hold a similar opinion about the hereafter. But this I can say with certainty—that men like Swami Vivekananda to me, are Gods. That is, we can form a notion of God only through these great personalities. I do not want to waste my time on a hypothetical subject, but what I can find and realize in Swami Vivekananda is enough for me. Sri Ramakrishna once told this story: Once a man went to a saloon: He wanted to have a drink and asked the saloon keeper how many barrels of whiskey he had in stock. The saloon keeper said "I have plenty of whiskey, but how much do you want—one or two glasses? That I can give you surely enough."

What I need I have found in Swami Vivekananda. My own spiritual thirst has been satisfied with what I got from him and I do not care to know what I do not need. I am a man-worshiper or a personal worshiper. The higher truths are revealed to us through the personality. To me, Swami Vivekananda is a man, a super-man, a God-man.

Early in 1901¹ he came to Benares. I was then at Hrishikesh, a forest retreat at the foot of the Himalayas. When I heard that he was in Benares, I went there to see him. A rajah requested Swamiji to open a center there, with promise of financial aid. He accepted his offer and asked me to take charge of that center. I was so conscious

of my own shortcomings and limitations that I did not have the courage to say "yes." Then I said, "In Benares there are so many learned scholars, there are so many institutions already existing, what can a man like me do in that field?" He looked at me and said: "Yes, I know there are many scholars in Benares, but I want you to express yourself and tell people what you know. If you have an idea which is your own and can express it clearly that will be impressive."

(To be continued.)

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REPORT

The actual date this year of the Birthday of Sri Ramakrishna, according to the Hindu Calendar, was March 9th. Swami Bodhananda went to Providence, R. I., with his friend Mr. Donald Davidson the day before, to join Swamis Akhilananda and Nikhilananda in the observance of this day of consecration.

The morning ceremony was performed in the Chapel, in the Hindu way, from 9 A. M. to noon. That evening a dinner was given to the very close friends of Swami Akhilananda, numbering about forty. He himself cooked all the delicious dishes. After the dinner addresses on the Life and Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna were delivered by some of the guests. Among the speakers were two local clergymen and the Swamis.

The public Festival was held on March 13th, many friends and visitors attending.

The Vedanta Society of New York celebrated this anniversary on Sunday, March 20th. We shall publish an account of it in our next number.

VEDANTA DARPANA

OR

MIRROR OF VEDANTA

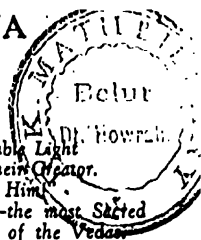
—oOo—

"Om Bhuh, Bhuvah, Swah;

We meditate upon that Adorable Light
of the Deva who is their Creator.

May He lead our thoughts to Him.

Gayatri—the most Sacred
Hymn of the Vedas.



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MAY, 1932

No. 5

SELECTIONS FROM THE BHAGAVAD GITA

With Explanation

CHAPTER I

In support of his argument against war and its horrors, Arjuna further declares that war leads to the extinction of families which results in two great moral and social evils: (1) The traditional family virtues cease to exist with the extinction of the families which are gifted with them and which preserve them through the ages. The loss of these virtues is regarded as a great detriment to the progress of civilization, in that they no longer exercise their wholesome influence upon the various social strata, or grades, which become fused into a composite mass losing entirely their distinctive power and efficiency to perform their functions in promoting the general welfare of the society in which and for which the individuals exist: (2) This promiscuous fusion or intermixture of blood between widely different races or groups of people tends to diminish the stability of character and potency for civilization. Furthermore, it leads to the depravity of women, and, in the long run, to the deformity and degeneration of the posterity as a race or a nation.

Arjuna concludes this part of his argument by citing that those people whose distinctive family virtues have

become extinct through the sort of admixture described above eternally dwell in Hell.

This argument will be continued in the following issues.

* * * * *

SRI RAMAKRISHNA—THE PROPHET OF RELIGIOUS HARMONY

(Delivered at the Vedanta Society of New York, on the
Birthday Anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna)

By SWAMI AKHILANANDA

Age after age the great religions of the world produced saints, seers, prophets and masters, or what they call divine incarnations. Everyone of them realized the truth in his own way and imparted that knowledge to the people. Everyone of them had a glimpse or realization of the infinite all-loving Being, and they came down to impart the same knowledge to us. Everyone of these saints or teachers saved the world, rescued the soul of man from spiritual degeneration. It has been a great privilege for India that there the appearance of these great teachers has been frequent. As time rolled on India pondered over their lives and drew her own conclusions regarding their realization and experiences. According to the teachings of the Hindus we find that there are some who are far greater than ordinary saints, prophets and seers. These are called the great saviours of the world. But for them we would not have understood anything of God, anything of the methods of God-realization; God would remain something unknown to us; God would remain limited only to the scriptures, and to the philosophies of scholars and to traditional beliefs.

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When we study the philosophical discourses given by different philosophers we do not find these writings carry any conviction whatsoever, because their authors had no conviction of their own. They conjectured and theorized. The other day I had the privilege of attending a meeting of different ministers. About twenty ministers were there and the discussion was regarding God and soul. Part of it was based on the conjecture or theory of God, but our idea was that we do not have any conviction or determining idea of God, because we do not know any one who has had direct knowledge of God. These great teachers of the world belonging to different religions can alone give us that conviction because of their own realization. Sri Ramakrishna is such a teacher. His own realization, his own direct perception, convinced him of the existence of God and he has transmitted to us the same conviction through his teachings and the life of his disciples. The great teachers realize the truth in a simple way with their inner urge, and then they give it to us. We do not need philosophical arguments to convince us of the truth when we see it directly. Take for instance the existence of this gentleman. We do not philosophize it, we know he is existing. We see Mr. Davidson, he is present here. Similarly these great teachers give us the truth directly because of their own direct perception of it. So the teachings of these masters can transform us, change us, nay, make us see God.

Sri Ramakrishna was born at a time when the whole national life of India was at its lowest ebb, when India was in a degraded condition in many respects. When we study the national lives of different countries we find that

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every nation rises and reaches its zenith and then falls. Like a wave it rises and reaches the highest point and then goes down, perhaps to rise again. Then, India had many rises and many falls in the course of centuries. Sri Ramakrishna was one of those towering personalities who could awaken the power in man. Again when we study the cultural activities of nations we find that the ascendancy of every nation is centered on some great spiritual personality. A great teacher generates tremendous power in himself and transmits it to all. It is true that he did not speak of anything else but religion. But the power that is manifested in him will express itself in and through various activities of the people of India. Sri Ramakrishna was born of a very devout Brahmin family. His natural tendency was towards religion. In his early life he had the natural urge to realize God. He heard so much of God. Then he thought if God is something, if God is real, I must realize Him. When a man realizes a thing, then alone is he thoroughly convinced of its existence. He realized God as the Eternal Mother of the Universe. He wanted to verify his own experiences by following methods put forth by different schools of Hindu thought. Accordingly, he followed innumerable methods systematically and realized the same truth in them as was revealed to him before.

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Another peculiar thought that possessed him was to understand the truth of other religions. Our revered Swami has explained to you how he followed different religions and wholly identified himself as a follower of each of those religions. I shall try to explain to you another characteristic of Sri Ramakrishna that has a great value

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in our spiritual life. If Sri Ramakrishna did dislike anything it was narrowness and sectarianism. He was the embodiment of universality. By universality we do not mean mere belief in the different methods propounded by various religions. He actually realized the truth by following different religions. His life was unique in this respect. Religion, my friends, is not something theological or controversial, it is primarily psychological. If we study the teachings of the great masters of the world, we find that they do not want us to believe merely in certain dogmas and doctrines, but they desire us to live the exalted life and realize the truth. Now when we study different minds of different people we find out that each is different from the other. We have so many different tendencies—perhaps one likes his mother most, another his father, still another a friend, and so forth. In India we have a peculiar notion of religion. We believe that everyone of these relationships can be applied to God. God is not merely our Father, but He is also our mother, friend or master. We can conceive Him in our own psychological way and finally realize Him.

Sri Ramakrishna wanted to enjoy God through all these attitudes of love. It is impossible for any man to understand the spiritual depth of that great life. If you study your own life you will find that you are most imperfect even in your love for your mother, your father, your friends. It is very difficult for us to be established in one of these relationships of love. But in the case of Sri Ramakrishna we find that he practiced these different relationships one after another and fully realized the same truth. At one time a teacher came to him—perhaps you

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will be glad to know that she was a lady—and taught him the methods of realizing God as the Mother of the universe. Sri Ramakrishna followed those methods and realized God as the Mother of the universe. Then there came a time when he wanted to realize God as a child. Perhaps some of you know how he fondled the baby Rama and looked after him as his own child. He would actually bathe that divine child, feed him, clothe him and put him to bed, just as a parent does. Whenever he would practice any particular spiritual exercise (Sadhana) he would be absorbed in that. One disciple of Sri Ramakrishna tells us that he was so thorough and particular in his religious practices that he would become completely absorbed in any one method until he reached and realized Truth through it.

When he followed Mohammedanism and Christianity he would not enter the Hindu temple, the temple of the Divine Mother, where he first realized that he was a son of the Mother. Similarly when he would worship God as mother he would wholly remain a child; when he worshipped God as child, he would assume the attitude of parenthood, he would actually be mother or father; when he would worship God as friend he would think of nothing but that he was a friend, a companion, a comrade, a sweet lover of the beloved.

My friends, what we need for our own religious growth is the understanding of spiritual needs. We are different and we have different tendencies. We can derive a great lesson from the life of Sri Ramakrishna, that everyone of us can realize the truth, can realize God by following our own natural tendencies, our own natural inclinations. If

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I have a disposition to love God as a child, let me establish that relationship with God, and let me develop my spiritual consciousness by following that urge.

Similarly, if another man has love towards his friend, let him direct that love to God, realize God as his friend. This is a wonderful synthesis of different attitudes or aspects of love. We often think that God can be worshipped perhaps as father or mother, but the life of Sri Ramakrishna is the demonstration of this harmony of different spiritual emotions. We have very little time to discuss the other aspects of his life. One illustration I shall give you—a simple one, which was given by him to make this point clear. He would say if I have to eat fish I cannot limit myself to one form of preparation. I would like to enjoy fish baked and boiled and curried and so forth. I would like to have different dishes of fish. Similarly, if I have to enjoy God I want to enjoy Him in various ways, not only by following the different religions, but also by following different human relationships. This is a living example, my friends, that everyone of us can reach God by following his own natural tendencies. If we study the spiritual practices of the world we can classify them under four heads and they are called the Yogas—paths of divine realization: the devotional path, path of knowledge, path of action and the path of meditation. Sri Ramakrishna was not only a perfect devotee but he was also a man of knowledge. Perhaps you all know how he was initiated into the path of knowledge by one of the greatest spiritual leaders in India, Tota Puri. He attained the state of consciousness within three days which was experienced by his teacher after forty years of tremendous

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practice. He had the same superconscious experience by following the method of Raja Yoga, or meditation, and he also practised in his life the *Ācra*t of action. He taught his disciples to serve man as a veritable expression of God. The illustrious Swami Vivekananda was imbued with this idea and taught the world this method of action—the method by which every man and woman can realize God by performing his or her own duties in the spirit of worship or in the spirit of consecrated service. So my friends we can boldly declare to the world that we find the summation of all spiritual practices in the life of that great teacher. We do not need any argument to establish this fact. I am not asking you to be exclusive or dogmatic, but as a student of rationalism, as a student of comparative religion, you will find as I do, that this great life—the life of Sri Ramakrishna—is unique and especially fitted to fulfil the spiritual needs of this age.

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VIVEKANANDA—THE MAN AND MASTER

(Continued from the last number)

By the Editor

Swami Vivekananda was not only a man of originality, but he was a developer of originality. He appreciated originality in others. Once a well educated man came to see him—a university graduate, (and you know sometimes some of those young men are a little smart and pedantic)—he quoted from several authors, and just after he had finished, Swami Vivekananda said: “Yes, my young friend, you are a scholar, but you have not said one word which is your own.”

Then, his love. I was more deeply impressed by his love than by his intellect. He used to hold classes and our brothers attended them. It is not that I never attended his classes, but I did something for him instead, such as making his bed or preparing some dishes for him, or sweeping the floor where he walked. I used to do that sort of work during that time rather than attend the classes. I can still remember the last day. As was his habit, he got up very early in the morning. He made a rule about that time for every member to congregate at the chapel for meditation at six o'clock in the morning, and in the evening at eight o'clock, and he used to be present himself. One day before that (the last day), a few of us overslept ourselves and we were late for the morning meditation. When we came to the chapel, meditation was over and Swami Vivekananda—oh, what a great love he had for us—said, "Why are you late?" There were three of us and we said that we overslept ourselves. Then he said: "You cannot have your meals here today. You have to go out and beg your meals. What have you come here for? You could have done all your sleeping and eating at home; you did not have to come here for that." Then we went out and all the time we were gone, we learned from some of the other Swamis, he anxiously inquired several times: "Where have they gone? Where will they eat?" When we came back he said: "You know I had to order that, because I felt that was the right thing for you to do."

He said once: "One eye shed tears of grief when I left home, because I hated to leave my mother, grandmother, brothers and sisters, and the other eye shed tears for my ideal." About that time, just a few days before that last

day, a man came, a friend of younger days, and asked him for some money. I used to be a sort of secretary to Swami Vivekananda and kept his little cash. And he asked me to give him two rupees—two rupees is about sixty-five cents—and I said: "Give him two rupees and there will not be much left." He answered: "Do you think I care for that? Give him two rupees plus a little more." Then he continued: "In a room, if one window is open and the corresponding window is closed, there is no ventilation; so let it go by one window and it will come by the other."

On that last day he took a class from one to four o'clock, for three hours, and he talked upon different subjects such as history, grammar, philosophy; and shortly after that, about five o'clock, he took a stroll with another Swami. About six or half past six, when we were having tea, not the supper, he came to us and said: "Will you give me a cup of tea?" After taking the tea he went upstairs and I was standing by the stairway down on the ground floor. That was in the month of July, and in India the mosquitoes are so numerous and so dangerous, as you get malaria from mosquitoes, that no one can sleep in bed without the curtains. He discovered that the curtains were broken, and when the mosquitoes enter through the holes of the net you can never put them out. That was his last word or order to me: "See that they all get new mosquito curtains." Then he started his meditation about eight o'clock. A Brahmacharin, a young student, was attending him. He went into his own room and asked the Brahmacharin to sit out on the piazza until he wanted him to come. About nine o'clock he asked him to come in and said: "I am feeling very warm, open all the windows."

Then he lay down, his body shivered and became still, motionless. The Brahmacharin had never seen him in that state before. He called an elderly Swami who was in the next room. He came at once, placed his hand on his heart and examined his pulse. There was no breathing. He then called the others. I was in the kitchen preparing his meal. I felt no motion in his pulse. Of course we tried some of the artificial methods to induce respiration. Then the doctors came and examined him, and did all they could to restore him to life. But he did not return from his Samadhi.

That is how this drama ended, but as I have told you, though we miss him very much, I mean his physical presence, we know he is still with us—his children, his disciples, and is guiding us and helping us and protecting us. Swami Vivekananda was a great apostle of strength and I am going to close my address by reading you a few lines from his own sayings:

"Strength is the one thing needful. Strength is the medicine which the poor must have when tyrannized over by the rich. Strength is the medicine which the ignorant must have when oppressed by the learned; and it is the medicine which sinners must have when tyrannized over by other sinners. It is man-making religion that we want. Anything that makes you weak physically, intellectually and spiritually reject it as poison; there is no life in it, it is not true. Truth must be strengthening, must be enlightening, must be invigorating."

"Back to the strengthening, life-giving teachings of the Upanishads. What we want is strength, and strength and every time strength, and the Upanishads are the great

mine of strength. Therein lies strength enough to invigorate the whole world; the whole world can be vivified, made strong, energized through them. Freedom, physical freedom, mental freedom and spiritual freedom are the watchwords of the Upanishads."

He was a great patriot. Because we are weak, because we do now know how to defend ourselves, these foreigners have been able to invade our country and exploit it for their own benefit. This subjection is due to our fault, our weakness, our ignorance, and the moment we develop that strength all these shadows shall vanish before it.

In spite of his great patriotism, he never found fault with the invaders, the conquerors, but with the people themselves. His idea was to develop the man, to develop the innate powers and potentialities in the man. His love of India was unique. His admonition to modern India was this: "O, India, forget not that your ideal woman is Sita, Savitri, and Damayanti; forget not that your ideal God is the great ascetic of ascetics, Umanath Sankara; forget not that your marriage, your wealth, your life are not for your sense enjoyment, are not for your individual personal pleasure; forget not that from your very birth you are sacrificed for the Mother; forget not that your society is but a shadow of the infinite Mahamaya; forget not that the lowest caste, the ignorant, the poor, the illiterate, the sweeper, the pariah, are your blood and your brothers. Thou hero, take courage, be proud that you are an Indian. Say in pride 'I am an Indian and every Indian is my brother.' Say 'the ignorant Indian, the poor Indian, the Pariah Indian, is my brother'. Be clad in torn rags and say in pride at the top of your voice, 'The Indians are

my brothers, are my life. India's gods and goddesses are my God; India's society the cradle of my childhood, the pleasure gardens of my youth, the sacred seclusion of my old age'. Say, brother—'India's soil is my highest heaven, India's good is my good' and pray day and night, 'Thou Lord, Thou Mother of the Universe, vouchsafe manliness unto me,—Thou Mother of Strength, take away my weakness, take away my unmanliness and make me Man.' "

Swami Vivekananda was an ideal leader. I follow Him and worship Him as my commander, my counselor, my hero, my Savior.

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THE SPIRITUAL PRACTICES AND EXPERIENCES OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA

By SWAMI BODHIANANDA

We celebrate the Anniversary of the birth of Sri Ramakrishna today, and our subject is "The Spiritual Practices and Experiences of Sri Ramakrishna."

"Out of the fullness of the heart the mouth speaketh," and sometimes out of the emptiness of the heart the mouth speaks. How I wish I could deliver this message to you in silence, in the language of the soul! But if I have to speak, please know that it is out of the emptiness of my heart.

In talking to you this morning on this subject I am reminded of a verse in Kalidasa's celebrated epic, *Raghu Vansha*. He was describing the dynasty of the Raghus, ancestors of Rama, and in the very beginning of the epic he says: "Where is the dynasty of Surya, the sun, and

where is my small knowledge? Indeed I am trying to cross the sea by a small canoe." Again, "I salute Madhava (Krishna) whose grace can make the dumb speak and the cripple jump over the mountain."

Sri Ramakrishna was known in his own time in India by the most holy mystic title, Parama Hamsa, which literally means the "great swan." The mystics of this class are called Parama Hamsas, great swans, for three reasons: First of all, the swan can live in two elements—the water and the earth; an illumined soul, a soul which has realized his oneness with Brahman can live here, that is on this earth plane as well as on the other plane, the plane of the spirit, the region where there is no night. Sri Ramakrishna belonged to that nightless region, the region of eternal light. And while he had that power to live on that plane he also had the power to live on this plane. I heard from Swami Vivekananda once that Sri Ramakrishna was naturally an inward man, he could live all the time in union with Brahman. His inner life was a life of constant communion with that which is "One without a second." Inwardly he was a monist, but outwardly he was a dualist. Outwardly he would speak, he would walk, he would eat, but all these actions were done only by a very small portion of his thought or will. That is, these were done rather mechanically, but the real self remained absorbed in the Bliss of Brahman. And there indeed we find a great expression of spiritual power—the power of Yoga.

The second reason why this class of Yogis are called Parama Hamsas is also symbolic: Because the mystic swan can easily separate the cream from the milk. In India we have this opinion: If you put a cup of milk before a swan

he can with his bills separate and eat the cream and leave the unessential part of the milk. Thirdly, the word Hamsa is an abbreviation of "Aham¹ Sah," I am He. These mystics are constantly conscious of their Oneness with Para Brahman. These are the reasons why this class of mystics are called Parama Hamsas.

From a child Sri Ramakrishna was a man of contemplation and meditation. When he was sent to school at the age of six years, he asked his parents why they were sending him to school, and when they said that by going to school he could have education, he enquired about the nature of that education. They said: "By this education you will be able to make a living." "I do not care for that education," said he, "the education that can give me only the competence of bread-earning. I want that education which can give me the knowledge of God." There is a class of Yogis who are born with the knowledge of God. They are like the pumpkin. The pumpkin sprouts the fruit first and then the flower. That is, these Yogis have their fruit first and then their flower appears. The essential part they realize first and then comes the unessential part, like preaching. When he was about sixteen years old he came to Calcutta with an older brother and shortly afterwards a temple was established on the bank of the Ganges, in a suburb of Calcutta, about four miles north. And the lady who built that temple and dedicated it to Mother Kali was a very rich woman. After the dedication ceremony was over Sri Ramakrishna's older brother, with whom he came to Calcutta, was appointed priest of that temple. He died within a year or two, and after his death Sri Ramakrishna succeeded him as priest.

His method of worship was entirely different from those of others. He was a thorough-going man, a most sincere man and when he offered flowers and fruits to Mother Kali—this ceremony he used to perform every day before an image—with child-like simplicity and earnestness he would beseech the Mother to accept those things as our earthly Mother does. He would say: "Mother, if you are the Mother of the universe why do you not accept these things? Why do you not stretch out your arms? Why do you not move? Why do you not answer my prayers?" And when his prayers were not answered he would cry: "O, Mother, reveal Thyself to me, so I can see Thee!" Just like a simple, artless, innocent child he would cry for his Divine Mother. And what was the result of that sincere craving? He finally saw the Mother. Perhaps there are critics in the world today who would not believe in these facts. But as I have already told you, Sri Ramakrishna was a unique man in his sincere devotion, faith and thoroughness. In him there were no two sides—inside and outside. The aim of religion to him was "to make the mind and mouth one." We all talk so much—we talk of God, we talk of universal Brotherhood; we talk of world peace; but if we examine into our hearts we will find a great difference between what we say and what we feel. But to Sri Ramakrishna it was all one; what he professed he practised. His heart was in accord with his word. That child-like simplicity and intense sincerity was the key to his spiritual achievements. I will tell you a little more about them.

(To be continued.)

VEDANTA DARPANA

OR
MIRROR OF VEDANTA

—o0o—

"Om Bhuh, Bhuvah, Swah:
We meditate upon that Adorable Light
of the Deva who is their Creator.
May He lead our thoughts to Him!"

*Gayatri—the most Sacred
Hymn of the Vedas.*



Vol. II.

JUNE, 1932

No. 6

SELECTIONS FROM THE BHAGAVAD GITA With Explanation.

CHAPTER I

The climax of Arjuna's argument was reached when in extreme sorrow and despondency he threw away his bow and arrow saying to Krishna:

"Alas! we are going to be involved in a great sin, for we are prepared to slay our own people for the desire of the pleasure of a Kingdom." (Verse 44).

"Verily, if the sons of Dhritarastra armed with weapons, kill me in battle unresisting and unarmed, that would be better for me." (Verse 45).

Krishna listened to this argument with profound silence and with intermittent smiles.

Why did Krishna smile when Arjuna's reasons against war were so benevolent and pacific? He pleaded for forgiveness of the sins of the enemy and renunciation of war at all costs.

Krishna was listening to Arjuna's argument with silence: Because he did not want to miss a single point by inattention, and did not wish to interrupt Arjuna by any objection. While he knew the fallacy of Arjuna's argument he smiled, instead of scowling, to make Arjuna feel free to

proceed with his argument. While he discovered how under the spell of delusion even a man like Arjuna lost all sense of duty and dignity, and became unwise and unmanly, he smiled again.

Krishna's answer begins with the 11th. verse of the Second Chapter. That verse strikes the keynote of the Gita, the Song Celestial.

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THE SPIRITUAL PRACTICES AND EXPERIENCES OF ŚRĪ RĀMAKRISHNA

(Continued from the last number)

By ŚWAMI BODHIANANDA

He became so absorbed in his devotion to Mother Kali that sometimes he would forget to offer the flowers at Her feet. Sometimes he would place them on his own head; he would feel that the Mother was in his own heart. Then he became absolutely incapable of performing the services the way others do, and naturally he had to leave that position. He found a very solitary place in a remote corner of that Temple Compound, and there he used to go and meditate unseen by others. Then he became so absorbed in the meditations that he forgot to eat his meals. That is characteristically a Hindu idea. He had a nephew who used to take care of him and sometimes he would force some food into his mouth. He had that great spiritual longing, Vyakulata—in which he found no satisfaction in these worldly things. In that great craving to see God he would cry like a child in the evening when he would see the sunset. He would say: "O, Mother, one day is gone and I have not seen Thee; how long will I have to wait?" And then he would beat his breast, sometimes he

would tear his hair and roll on the ground like a mad man, and those people who saw that phenomenon could not refrain from weeping for him; even the hardest heart would pray sympathetically that what he was desirous of obtaining might come to him so that he might be saved from that sort of agony and torture.

He subjected himself to all the spiritual practices ordained in different religions. He realized the conception of the Sonship in Christianity. In fact he met a Christian who initiated him to some of the mystic Christian embodiments and covenants. He met a Mohammedan priest and received his initiation to Mohammedanism from him. And as I have told you he was a thorough-going man. In order to appreciate the right spirit of Mohammedanism he used to dress himself like a Mohammedan; he used to say his prayer like a Mohammedan priest and he would even feed upon a Mohammedan diet. The idea was this: By those correct external conditions he tried to realize the exact spirit of Mohammedanism.

He also practised the devotional exercises by which Hanuman, the great devotee of Rama, realized his ideal. He was a monkey god. As an unspoiled child Sri Ramakrishna accepted those exercises as they were given to him, and in order to realize the devotional spirit of Hanuman he lived on a tree for a few days. He ate uncooked vegetables and fruits, just as the monkey does. By practising all those exercises as ordained in different cults and creeds and religions, he finally attained to this conclusion—that all religions that men follow through different religious inclinations ultimately lead to one and the same goal. The greatest achievement of Sri Ramakrishna's life perhaps was

that; I mean the harmony of religions. He paid most devout respects to all religions. And this appreciation of religions to him was not a matter of intellectual comprehension, nor was it an assent to a popular opinion. He was not satisfied with those things; it was his own experience, his direct knowledge, his acceptance, of them. He was the man who could speak with absolute authority upon that subject, the subject of unity, of harmony, of religions. Indeed in this age he has proclaimed once more the great message which Krishna preached in the remotest past. "All religions ultimately lead to one and the same goal." Just as Krishna recognized the psychological necessity of religion to man, even so Sri Ramakrishna in this age has recognized that great need. According to his teachings, every person must have his own religion. That is, religion after all is man's own conception and realization of his ideal, and man must first of all form this great spiritual ideal and then he must realize it. He must realize it not by controversial processes, nor by faith, but by direct knowledge. That proves what a great master he was. •

Then this great message he left to his most sincere, pure, loyal and worthy disciple, Swami Vivekananda. •

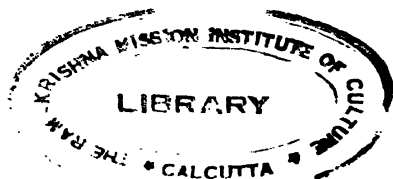
Sri Ramakrishna was a great student of nature. All his illustrations and parables were the results of his own personal observations. I will just give you one or two examples. Once a man asked him what is the nature of a Siddha—Siddha means a perfected one and it also means boiled. He said: "He is soft like a boiled potato." That is, a Siddha, a perfected one, is a soft man, a sweet person, nothing is rough or harsh about him. So you see how by that simple illustration he explained a deep, abstract condition.

Then about preaching he said: "Let the lotus of the soul unfold, then the hungry bees will come." He never went about preaching and imposing upon others his own spiritual ideas, but all he did was to unfold the great self, the God within him, and those who were spiritually hungry came to him. Then to illustrate the great craving to see the Mother, he said: "The Mother gives the child toys and the child plays with them, but the moment he throws away the toys and cries for the mother, the mother comes." If we can throw away these toys — the unessential things — like the dollar and desire for name and fame, and can cry earnestly for the Mother, She instantly appears.

Then he explained the distinction between devotion and discrimination. The devotee is like the kitten, the baby of the cat. That little thing is entirely dependent upon the mother, in fact he uses no self efforts. The man of discrimination is like the monkey cub; the moment the monkey is born he becomes self-dependent. He hangs on the branches of the tree. In fact he is born on the tree. You have seen how the monkey cub hangs on the mother, but the kitten is dependent upon the mother. Similarly the devotee knows nothing but the mother; but the man of discrimination is self-dependent. He uses his own judgment and takes care of himself. So by those observations he became wise and he derived all those great moral and spiritual lessons from them.

Just one word more and I shall have finished.

He was most humble with all those spiritual attainments. Once a man came to the garden and Sri Ramakrishna was so unostentatious and simple that when the visitor saw him he thought he was a gardener and asked him to fetch him some flowers which he gladly did, and afterwards, when he



was told he was not a gardener but the Parama Hamsa living in that garden, he bowed before him and begged his pardon. Sri Ramakrishna is said to have told this story about humility: A disciple came to a teacher and the latter in order to test the simplicity and humility of the former, asked him to get him something worse than himself, something more insignificant than he himself. You know we all have a conceited opinion about our own self. And the disciple thought: What did he mean by that — something worse than myself? Then he went to a cow. He thought perhaps that cow was worse than himself. Then he said: "No, the cow is cleaner and more innocent, the cow cannot be lower than I am." Then he went to a goat and by reasoning also found out that the goat was higher than he; then he went from animal to animal and from thing to thing and found nothing worse than himself. Finally he came to a deserted part of a park and there he found some human excrement (pardon me for using that word) and thought perhaps that filthiest thing was worse than he. But the moment he approached it a voice came from it and said: "O, you unholy man, don't you come to me! Yesterday I was a nice cake and one like you ate me, and today I reduced to this. I may have a worse fate if you touch me."

Then he came to his master and said: "I can find nothing worse than me, Sir; perhaps I am the lowest of all."

When Swami Vivekananda was asked by some friends to write the life of Sri Ramakrishna he expressed his inability by saying "When I think of his spiritual greatness, I find no words adequate to express it. I do not know whether he was an incarnation of God, or a Master, or a Prophet, or a Siddha. What I know of him I have already expressed

in my own humble, limited way. But what he really was I am not yet able to fathom. I have placed him before you as I know him; you have to draw your own conclusions. Whether you accept him as an incarnation, or as a Yogin, or as a Master, or as a Seer, or a Sage, depends upon you."

Friends, I am delighted to have with me this morning my friend and brother Swami Akhilananda, who is the head of our Vedanta Society in Providence, Rhode Island. Most of you have met him. He is a sweet, lovely, pleasant person and I do not have to say more about his personality. It will speak for itself. He will tell us something about Sri Ramakrishna. He is an ideal devotee and his words will touch our hearts. * * * *

A NEWSPAPER REPORT OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA (Furnished by Swami Nikhilananda)

One day at an unfashionable place by the sea, the professor was seen crossing the lawn between the boarding house and his cottage, accompanied by a man in a long red coat. The coat, which had something of a priestly cut, descended far below the man's knees, and was girded around his waist with a thick cord of the same reddish orange tint. He walked with a strange shambling gait, and yet there was a commanding dignity and impressiveness in the carriage of his neck and bare head that caused everyone in sight to stop and look at him. He moved slowly, with the swinging tread of one who had never hastened, and in his great dark eyes was the beauty of a dark alien civilization which might, —should time and circumstance turn it into opposition,— become intolerably repellent. He was dark, about the colour of a light quadroon, and his full lips, which in a man of Caucasian race would have been brilliant scarlet, had a tint

of bluish purple. His teeth were regular, white and sometimes seemed cruel, but his beautiful expressive eyes, and the proud wonderful carriage of his head, the swing and grace of the heavy crimson tassels that hung from the end of his sash, made one forget that he was too heavy for so young a man . . .

Was he a negro? Was he an Indian? The people were buzzing with interest. Finally they decided that he was a Brahmin, but the theory was rudely shattered when that night, at supper, they saw him partake, wonderingly, but evidently with relish, of hash. It was something that needed explanation, and they unanimously repaired to the cottage after supper to hear this strange new being discourse.

He seemed very young, even younger than his twenty-eight years, and as he seated himself he covered his legs carefully with his flowing robe, like a woman or a priest; but the hoary ancient turn of his thought belied his child-like manner.

"It was the other day," he would say, in his musical voice, "only just the other day,—not more than four hundred years ago." And then would follow tales of cruelty and oppression of a patient race and a suffering people, and of a judgment to come! "Ah, the English, the English," he would say, "only just a little while ago they were savages . . . Even now they are barely emerging from barbarism."

"Nonsense," said one of his scandalized hearers, "that was at least five hundred years ago."

"And did I not say 'a little while ago'? What are a few hundred years when you look at the antiquity of the human soul? . . . Where is their religion? They take the name of that Holy One, they claim to love their fellowmen, they

civilize — by Christianity! — No! It is their hunger that has civilized them, not their God. The love of man is on their lips, in their hearts there is nothing but evil and every violence." . . . Then, going on more slowly, his beautiful voice deepening till it sounded like a bell, "But the judgment of God will fall upon them, 'I am the god of vengeance' said the Lord, 'I will destroy', and destruction is coming. What are you Christians? Not one-third of the world's population. Look at those Chinese, millions of them. They are the vengeance of God that will light upon you. There will be another invasion of the Huns," adding, with a little chuckle, "There will be another Attila. They will sweep over Europe, they will not leave one stone standing upon another. Men, women, children, all will go, and the dark ages will come again." His voice was indescribably sad and pitiful; then suddenly and flippantly, dropping the seer, "As for me, — I don't care! The world will rise up better from it, but it is coming. The vengeance of God, it is coming soon."

"Soon?" they all asked.

"It will not be a thousand years until it is done." They drew a breath of relief. It did not seem imminent.

"And God will have vengeance," he went on, "you may not see it in religion, you may not see it in politics, but you must see it in history; and as it has been, it will come to pass. If you grind down the people, you will suffer. We in India are suffering the vengeance of God. Look upon these things. They ground down those poor people for their own wealth, they heard not the cry of distress, they ate from gold and silver when the people cried for bread, and the Mohammedans came upon them slaughtering and killing;

slaughtering and killing they overran them. India has been conquered again and again for years, and last and worst of all came the Englishman. You look about India, what has the Hindu left? Wonderful temples everywhere. What has the Mohammedan left? Beautiful palaces. What has the Englishman left? Nothing but mounds of broken brandy bottles! And God has no mercy upon my people because they had no mercy. By their cruelty they degraded the populace, and when they needed them the common people had no strength to give for their aid. If a man cannot believe in the vengeance of God, he certainly cannot deny the Vengeance of History . . . "

And then, having said his say, the Swami was silent. A babel of thin-voiced chatter rose about him, to which he listened apparently unheeding. Occasionally he cast his eye up to the roof and repeated softly "Shiva, Shiva, Shiva!" and the little company, shaken and disturbed by the current of powerful feeling and vindictive passion which seemed to be flowing like molten lava beneath the silent surface of this strange being, broke up, perturbed.

He stayed days among them, keenly interested in all practical things; his efforts to eat strange food were heroic and sometimes disastrous to himself, and he was constantly looking about for something which would widen the possibilities of feeding his people in times of famine. Our ways seemed to inspire him with a sort of horror, meat-eating cannibals that we seemed to be! But he concealed it, either with absolute dumbness, or by a courteous flow of language which effectually hid his thoughts.

He had been brought up amidst polemics and his habit of argument was mainly Socratic, beginning insidiously and

simply by a story, or clear statement of some incontestable fact, and then from that deriving strange and unanswerable things. All through, his discourses abounded in picturesque illustration and beautiful legend. To work, to get on in the world, in fact any measure of temporal success seemed, to him, entirely beside the subject. He had been trained to regard the spiritual life as the real thing of this world. Love of God, and love of man. One beautiful story he told of a man whose wife reproached him with his troubles, reviled him because of the success of others, and recounted to him all his failures. "Is this what your God has done for you?" she said to him, "after you have served Him so many years?" Then the man answered, "Am I a trader in religion? Look at that mountain. What does it do for me, or what have I done for it? And yet I love it, because it am so made that I love the beautiful. Thus I love God." "And the love of the Hindu," he told us, "goes further than the love of the Christian, for that stops at man; but the religion of Buddha goes on toward the beasts of the field and every creeping thing that has life."

At sixteen he had renounced the world and spent his time among men who rejoiced in these things and looked forward to spending day after day on the banks of the Ganges talking of the higher life. There was one story he told of a king who offered a gift to a Rishi. The Rishi refused but the king insisted and begged that he would come with him. When they came to the palace he heard the king praying, and the king begged for wealth, for power, for length of days from the God; the Rishi listened, wondering, until at last he picked up his mat and started away. Then the king opened his eyes from his prayers and saw him. "Why

are you going?" he said, "you have not asked for your gift." "I," said the Rishi, "ask from a beggar?"

When someone suggested to him that Christianity was a saving power, he opened his great dark eyes upon him and said, "If Christianity is a saving power in itself, why has it not saved the Ethiopians, the Abyssinians?" He also arraigned our own crimes, the horror of women on the stage, the frightful immorality in our streets, our drunkenness, our thieving, our political degeneracy, the murdering in our West, the lynching in our South, and we, remembering his own Thugs, were still too delicate to mention them . . .

He cared more for Thomas à Kempis than for most any other writer, and had translated the *Imitation of Christ* into Bengali; as for receiving the Stigmata, he spoke of it as the natural result of an agonizing love of God. The teaching of the Vedas, constant and beautiful, he applied to every event in life, quoting a few rhymes and then translating, and with the translation of the story giving the meaning. His mouth, also, was full of wonderful proverbs. "Of what use is the knowledge that is locked away in books," he said, in speaking of the memories of Hindu boys.

Himself a Hindu monk, he told, once, of a time when he turned into a forest, a trackless forest, because he felt that God was leading him; of how he went on for three days, starving, and how he was more perfectly happy than he had ever been before because he felt that he was entirely in the hands of God. "When my time comes," he said, "I shall go up to the mountain and there, by the Ganges, I shall lay myself down, and with the water singing over me I shall go to sleep, and above me will tower the Himalayas — men have gone mad for those mountains!"

There was once a monk, he told us, who went far up into the mountains and saw them everywhere about him, and above his head towered their great white crests. Far below, thousands of feet, was the Ganges, a narrow stream at the foot of a precipice. "Shall I then like a dog die in my bed when all this beauty is around me?" and he plunged into the chasm.

The Hindu monks have no monasteries, no property. Often on Swami's lips was the phrase, "They would not dare to do this to a monk."

According to him the monks were not allowed to do penance, not allowed to worship, were, in short, minor deities to the Hindu people; but yet he was wonderfully unspoiled and simple, claiming nothing for himself, playing with the children, twirling a stick between his fingers with laughing skill and glee at their inability to equal him.

All the people of that little place were moved and excited by this young man, in a manner beyond what might be accounted for by his coming from a strange country and a different people. He had another power, an unusual ability to bring his hearers into vivid sympathy with his own point of view. It repelled, in some cases however, as strongly as it attracted, but whether in support or opposition, it was difficult to keep a cool head or a level judgment when confronted with him.

All the people of all degrees were interested; women's eyes blazed and their cheeks were red with excitement; even the children of the village talked of what he had said to them; all the idle summer boarders trooped to hear him, and all the artists longingly observed him and wanted to paint him.

He told strange stories as ordinary people would mention the wonders of electricity, curious feats of legerdemaine and tales of monks who had lived one hundred or one hundred and thirty years; but Theosophy, ordinarily so-called, drew down his most magnificent contempt, whilst magnetism and hypnotism seemed to be everyday occurrences. His holy men at a single glance converted hardened sinners, detected men's most inmost thoughts, and died and came to life again as if they had the nine lives of a cat; but these things were trifles, always his thoughts turned back to his people. He lived to raise them up and make them better and had come this long way in the hope of gaining help to teach them to be practically more efficient. We hardly knew what he needed; money, if money would do it; tools, advice, new ideas. And for this he was willing to die to-morrow. At times he even expressed a great longing that the English Government would take him and shoot him. "It would be the first nail in their coffins," he would say, with a little gleam of his fierce white teeth, "and my death would run through the land like wild fire."

His great heroine was the dreaded Rani of the Indian Mutiny, who led her troops in person. Most of the old mutineers, he said, had become monks in order to hide themselves, and it accounted very well for the dangerous quality of the monks' opinions. There was one man of them who had lost four sons and could speak of them with composure, but whenever he mentioned the Rani he would weep, with tears streaming down his face. "That woman was a goddess," he said "a *devi*" . . .

In quoting from the Upanishads his voice was most musical. He would quote a verse in Sanskrit with intonations and

then translate it in beautiful English of which he had a wonderful command. And, in his mystical religion, he seemed perfectly and unquestionably happy.

And yet, when they gave him money, it seemed as if some injury had been done him and some disgrace put upon him. "Of all the worries I have ever had," he said, as he left us, "the greatest has been the care of this money!" His horrified reluctance to take it haunted us. He could not be made to see why he might not wander on in this country, as in his own, without touching a medium of exchange, which he considered disgraceful, and the pain he showed when it was made clear to him that without money he could not even move, hung around us for days after he left, as if we had hurt some innocent thing, or had wounded a soul.

In doing violence to all his ancient prejudices, also, it seemed as if, young as he was, he was playing with fire, and that such playing could not but injure his moral fibre; and we saw him leave us, after that one little week of knowing him, with the fear that clutches the heart when a beloved, gifted, passionate child fares forth, unconscious, in an untried world.

A SHORT ACCOUNT OF THE EASTER FESTIVAL

By the Editor

It is still a point of doubt whether Jesus was actually crucified and buried on a Friday and rose from the grave on the following Sunday in the early spring.

The Festival of the Resurrection of Jesus derives its name Easter from *Eastre*, a Saxon goddess whose festival was celebrated annually in the early spring, around the vernal equinox.

In the early Christian Church the celebration lasted eight days. After the eleventh century it was limited to three days, and in later Centuries generally to two days. Now it is kept for one day only.

The proper time for the Easter Celebration has occasioned not a little controversy. In the third century a dispute arose on this point between the Eastern and Western Churches. The great mass of the Eastern Christians celebrated Easter on the fourteenth day of the Paschal moon, considering it to be the equivalent of the Jewish Passover. The Western Churches observed it on the Sunday after the Paschal full moon, holding that it was the commemoration of the Resurrection of Jesus. The council of Nicae (325 A. D.) decided in favour of the Western usage, branding the Eastern usage with the name "quartodociman"—heresy.

As a rule since 325 A. D. the Easter day is the first Sunday after the Paschal full moon (i. e. the first full moon which occurs between the 21st. of March and 23rd. of April—the period when the sign Aries, Ram, of the Zodiac is in the ascendant), and if the full moon^o happens upon a Sunday Easter day is the Sunday after.

Thus the Easter Festival is nothing but a Christianized Passover and a further appropriation of the Spring Festival which used to be, and still is, celebrated by all races and religions in the world in honor of the Resurrected Nature. Occurring as it does between the 21st. of March and the 23rd. of April, the Easter day has an astrological significance also.

Taking all this into account it can be said that the Easter Festival in Christianity is not an original Christian Festival in commemoration of the Resurrection of Jesus from the grave.

VEDANTA DARPANA

OR

MIRROR OF VEDANTA

—oOo—

"Om Bhuh, Bhuvah, Swah:

We meditate upon that Adorable Light
of the Deva who is their Creator.

May He lead our thoughts to Him!"

Gayatri—the most Sacred
Hymn of the Vedas.

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SELECTIONS FROM THE BHAGAVAD GITA

With Explanation

CHAPTER II

The theme of the Bhagavad Gita is Renunciation. Sri Ramakrishna used to say that if the two syllables of the word "Gita" (Gi and Ta) are repeated in quick succession the sound will be Tagi (Tyagi) which means "Renouncer." So the burden of the argumentation of the Gita is Tyaga—Renunciation.

Both Krishna and Arjuna were advocating renunciation in the course of their conversation, but their viewpoints were different.

Arjuna wanted to renounce action, especially the action (war) which he was called upon to perform, for the reasons already described. But Krishna's conception of renunciation was more psychological than physical or ethical. He emphasized the renunciation of desire or attachment to the fruits of action. To him, action itself is an indifferent thing—neither good nor bad, but the disposition or intention of the doer makes or mars the action as good or bad, as the case may be. "You have a right to the action only and not to the fruits of action. Let not the fruits of action be the motive to your action, and never indulge in inaction." (Chapter II. 47).

The ideal of Renunciation that Krishna holds up to us in these lessons is supremely spiritual and has a universal and eternal application. By realizing it one can make all work into worship and live in the world without being of it.

* * * * *

SRI RAMAKRISHNA

THE PARABLE OF THE THREE ROBBERS

A man was going through the woods. On his way he was caught by a band of three robbers. They took away everything he had. Then the first robber asked: "What is the use of keeping this man alive?" And drawing his sword, he was about to kill him, when the second robber stopped him, saying: "What good will be done by killing him? Tie his hands and feet and throw him to one side." So they bound his hands and feet and went away leaving him by the roadside. After they had been gone for a while, the third robber returned and said to him: "Ah! are you hurt? Come, let me untie the cords and release you." Then, when he had removed the cords, he said: "Now come with me. I will show you the road." After walking for a long distance, they found the road, and then the robber said: "Look, there is your home. Follow the road and you will soon reach it." The man, thanking him, replied: "Sir, you have done me a great service. I am greatly obliged to you. Will you not come with me to my house?" The robber answered: "No, I cannot go there; the guard will find me out."

This world is the wilderness. The three robbers are the three Gunas (qualities) of nature,—Sattwa (protective), Rajas (creative), and Tamas (destructive). Jiva or the individual soul is the traveler; self-knowledge is his

treasure. The Tamas quality tries to destroy the Jiva, the Rajas quality binds him with the fetters of the world, but the Sattwa quality protects him from the actions of Rajas and Tamas. By taking refuge with the Sattwa quality, Jiva becomes free from lust and anger, which are effects of Tamas; the Sattwa quality also emancipates the Jiva or the individual soul from the bondage of the world. But the Sattwa quality itself is also a robber. It cannot give Divine wisdom or the knowledge of the Absolute. It leads one, however, up to the path of the Supreme Abode and then it says: "Behold, there is thy home!" Then it disappears. Even the Sattwa quality cannot go near the abode of the Absolute.

* * * * *

WHENCE, WHY, WHITHER

By the Editor

In the forest retreats of India, in the days of the Upanishads, the eternal questions arose once more: "What is the cause of all this? What does it all exist for? And where does it all end?" These three are the most important questions in Hindu philosophy. And this morning I shall discuss some of the theories that have been advanced by men to answer them. I shall present four great theories in particular.

First of all, the theory of special creation. In Sanskrit it is called 'Arambha Vada.'

Secondly, the theory of evolution. The Sanskrit term for it is 'Vikāśa Vada.'

Thirdly, the theory of illusion or 'Vivarta Vada' in Sanskrit.

The fourth theory is called 'Vignana Vada' or the theory of momentary existence.

Of course there are many other theories to answer these questions, but I shall have no time to discuss them all. I shall even have to abbreviate these four theories in one discourse.

According to the first theory, the theory of special creation, the three fundamental categories which constitute the subject matter of all religions and of all philosophies—namely, God, matter and soul—are three entirely separate entities limited by the conditions of time, space and causation. There is an extra-cosmic God, there is His creation—this world, and there is man, or the soul of man. But God exists in time and place. Now how can this God be the eternal God? How can this God be the infinite God if He has a form, if He can be conceived by the mind and if He creates man? That very condition makes this God a finite Being. In the first place, if He exists at all, according to our conception of existence, He must exist through time, space and causation. He has a body; He has love; He has other feelings; and He rules our destiny. Now, how can such a Being be an eternal Being? How can such a Being be a free Being, a perfect Being? He is limited in space and in time. That is, our conception of this God lies in the fact of His personality and, mark my words, personality means a mask, a form, and personality can exist only through time and space. It must have a beginning and it must necessarily have an end.

Time and space in which we conceive this God, are already existent conditions. Thus this God is not an eternal God in the sense that He exists for all time and beyond time. That is, time and space existed before Him. He cannot be the infinite Being—infinite in the sense that He

has no cause—that He is the universal Spirit, not limited to any form, not designated by any name. This proves that this God is not an infinite Being, or an infinite Spirit. But this idea of God and this theory of special creation which I shall discuss more fully later; have an undisputed sway in the Christian world. Even today a Christian cannot think of God as Spirit, infinite and universal. To him the idea of an intracosmic God is most shocking, most sacrilegious. To him God is a Being who dwells in a world far away from this world of ours and we must remain His slaves. Christianity has made men psychological slaves. That you are divine—that you are eternally free, that you need no intermediation of another person to save you—these ideas are most shocking to the orthodox Christian. They are outrageous to the Christian theologian, at least.

But this theory of special creation, as I have already told you, still prevails in the Christian world. Naturally, when the theory of evolution made its first appearance in the western world, it was viewed with horror and consternation, because it was calculated to destroy all religion by overthrowing the Biblical theory of creation. According to this theory God, who has a body, who has love, who has hatred, wrath, partiality and prejudice—such a God—has created this world of ours in six days. Of course there are many, and even some orthodox Christians, who give another interpretation of this theory of six-day creation. I want you to remember—those of you who have seen the play "Green Pastures,"—that in it is the exact picture of the Christian God. This God has an office and a secretarial staff. Sometimes He goes out for visits and the inspection of His creation—to see how it is going on, how His first

created being is behaving and so forth. This God creates this world of ours in six days. Those of you who have studied astronomy will know how infinitesimally small this earth world is, compared to the solar system—the whole universe consisting of all the planets and stars and satellites. Now, if this God created this earth world, which is just like a small atom in the whole universe—if it took Him six days to create this, how much longer then should He have taken to create the other planets of this universe? They say that in one afternoon He created the other things of the universe. There are some planets which are three hundred million times as large and as hot as this sun of ours. If our world came as near to these as it does to the sun, in a moment it would be burnt to ashes. How then could this God create all those vast planets in a few hours on an afternoon while it took Him six days to create this small world on which we live?

But if you present these questions rationally to the Christian bigot he will say that is a great mystery—we cannot account for all actions of God. But, my dear friends, we can solve most of the mysteries. And then there is another way of looking at this theory of creation. This God created our world by His fiat. "Let there be the world, let there be man," — and the world and the man came. Certainly this shows that God is a magician. Just as a magician can hypnotize you into seeing things, in that way God could have projected man and the universe by his command. But we are now considering these most vitally important theories as realists, as sensible men and women.

Has any person except a magician produced anything from nothing by mere suggestion? 'No one can do that.

That is, if this world is a reality it could not be the projection of the fiat of God. It could not have come from nothing. That is an impossibility. Then when you corner this theologian who believes in that sort of creation, I mean the creation from nothing, he will say: "No, God created this world out of some material that existed before this fact of creation or act of creation." Now, who created that substance out of which God created this world? If you reason that way you will never come to a stopping point or you will have to make the well-known logical fallacy—*regressus ad infinitum*. If you say this God, who created man and the world, did not create that material, or substance, out of which He fashioned this world, then I will at once ask who created that substance? And there must have been another creator of that substance of which this substance was a product, and in this way you will never be able to reach the starting point.

There are some other fallacies besides that. If this God is an impartial God and a merciful God, why do we not find an invariable and unconditional presence of His mercy and impartiality among His creatures? According to this theory of special creation we are born only for one term of life or one incarnation, and mark my words, we have been created directly by this God who is impartial, who is wise; by this God who is powerful, who is loving and just. Do we find impartial justice in our conditions here? Do we find equality here if we are created for one incarnation only? If this God is so loving, so powerful, so wise, so impartial and so just, why are we not all equally and eternally blessed and happy and peaceful? Why should there be sickness and poverty and inharmony among us? Why,

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by His infinite wisdom did He not remove those things from our midst or before He created us? That establishes only a divine caprice. This God will be a God who can do anything He wills; a God who is whimsical and despotic—who does whatever He pleases without any consideration of the comfort and peace and bliss of His creatures. I can accept a God of that type. This God cannot be both benevolent and omnipotent. He can be either one or the other. He can be benevolent and compassionate without having the power to use His mercy and compassion for all. Or He may have infinite power to do whatever He likes, but not the mercy or compassion. Then, why should He create? Granted that there is such a God as that, why should He create if He is infinitely free and perfect; why should there be the slightest desire in Him for creation? Desire presupposes the consciousness of limitation, of want. So, the natural conclusion would be that this God is in bondage, He is not a free Being. Then how can a Being who is not free Himself give us freedom if we come to Him? So considering all these fallacies the Hindus have long since ceased to believe in this theory of special creation.

The rational mind of the Hindu would rather take that two and two makes anything other than four, that the shortest distance between two points is anything other than a straight line, than believe in the absurd theory of special creation. In India it is an exploded theory; people do not believe in it any more.

Then the next theory is the theory of evolution. This is an old theory in India. It has existed in India at least for the last three thousand years and the celebrated author of this theory, Kapila, was a fearless rationalist. According

to him whatever does not stand to reason must be thrown overboard. He endeavored to give a rational explanation of the universe and the conditions of man. He never believed in an extracosmic God, because he demanded proofs for the existence of this God, and he further contended that according to the accepted channels of evidential knowledge or proofs such a God, that is, a God who is our creator, cannot be established. What are these proofs? *Pratyakṣa*, *Anumana* and *Shavda*.

Pratyakṣa is the direct perception; *Anumana* is inference; *Shavda* is word or testimony of eminent men. Of course, when he denied this third proof—testimony of eminent men—he had this in his mind: He did not doubt the experience of eminent men, but his challenge was this—every individual must experience the truth for himself. What an eminent man sees or propounds must be verified by our first-hand experience as truth. Then he has given a most rational theory for the explanation of this universe. He believed in two entities as real and eternal. *Purusha* and *Prakṛiti*—spirit and matter. And the proximity or conjunction of these two entities is the cause of creation. There are two great causes of creation: one is the material cause, in Sanskrit we call it *Upadana Karana*, and the other the efficient cause, or *Nimitta Karana*. While the author of this theory of evolution, Kapila, believed in these two causes, the second cause, that is the efficient cause, is not God, but man himself: the spirit in man is the second cause of creation. Of course according to him, either of these two causes itself is inefficient and powerless to create, but there must always be their *Samyoga*, juxtaposition or conjunction.

The first cause, the material cause, according to Kapila, is inert and insentient; and the second cause is sentient and intelligent. That is, one without the other cannot create, but when these two are conjoined then there is creation. And according to him there is no beginning of the one or the other, and there is no end of the one or the other. These two are like two eternally running parallel lines—they never end, just as they never began. There we find the pure rationality of this conception—I mean the conception of Kapila's theory of evolution. And out of that contact have sprung all these evolutes. Matter is an eternal entity. Kapila also established the law of conservation of matter. The sum total of matter is an invariably constant quantity. Of course, this matter can exist in various forms or states, but it is never annihilated.

The other cause — the efficient cause, the soul, also is eternal. Now this is the way in which this process takes place—I mean the process of evolution. Go back in your mind to a point where these two entities just come in close contact. Then imagine that out of that contact comes first *Mahat*, which means the great mind. Then from *Mahat*, the universal mind, comes the subjective or individual mind. The moment this comes into existence, objectivity arises. There cannot be subject without object, nor object without subject. One cannot be without the other. The moment the individual mind of man has been evolved there is evolved at the same time, simultaneously, that something which may be called its objective counterpart in the material world. Then out of this contact again—that is of the subjective and the objective, or the ego and the non-ego—there have come the other evolutes. According to the Sam-

khyā philosophy, there are twenty-four principal evolutes or categories of Prakṛiti; the gross evolutes have come from the subtle ones. Here we find the basic principle of the law of evolution. Of course, Darwin worked out this law in a particular way. That is, he limited it to the field of evolution of species only, but this law as propounded by Kapila is a generalized principle; whereas Darwin's theory was only a particular application of the principle of evolution. Of course, Kapila also has considered the evolution of species as a corollary to the main theory; but unlike Darwin and others who have followed him, he has recognized something in man which makes him what he is—that is, the soul element in man; this soul or spirit in man is an eternal entity, an incorporeal essence. It takes or wears this form, or is incarnated, but it exists for all eternity. He has also recognized the existence of the soul in all beings. This soul, this free spirit, exists most persistently in all beings. The difference between one species and another consists not in the kind, but in the degree of manifestation or evolution. That is, there is the same spirit in all. In the lower species this spirit is obscured or covered with veils of the *gunas*, the qualities of nature; but in the higher species most of those veils have been lifted. According to this theory there is no substantial difference between the lowest form of life, the amoeba, and the most highly developed form, the Buddhas or the Christ. There is the sameness of the spirit, but there is the difference only in the degree of its manifestation. That establishes that we are all fundamentally, finally and eternally free and independent. We have not been born of sin and shapen in iniquity. Adam and Eve are not our first parents; we are parentless; we are

eternal; this parental condition is an accidental condition. This spirit in its struggle for, further evolution, for more knowledge, more power and larger freedom—passes through these conditions. That is, parenthood is an incidental factor in this great process of unfoldment or evolution on the part of the being, whether it is a lower or a higher being.

Kapila has concluded his theory by stressing that man must once more assert and realize his original freedom—his original perfection or, if you please, his original divinity. Man must shake off these false thoughts and notions that he has a body, that he is young or old, rich or poor, dark or white. All these notions are offspring of ignorance, and this ignorance must depart. That is, finally this soul must realize its emancipation from the contact of matter. But so long as we are conscious and cognizant of this world as it is, we must assume these two entities. Kapila, as I have already told you, was a realist and he did not deny the existence of matter or the physical manifestation of the universe. He believed in cycles or periods of evolution. The present period of evolution or cycle existed in the past and it shall be repeated in the future. The cosmos is an eternal stream, but Purusha which has been caught in its process must finally achieve its freedom from it; the bondage of Prakriti.

The third theory is the theory of illusion, *Vivarta Vada*. *Vivarta* means refracted like the mirage. According to the believers in this theory, Brahman the Absolute Existence, Intelligence and Bliss is alone real, and the universe is not as it appears, or is unreal. There is one school of this thought which denies this universe. According to it this

universe is not; it is our own thought that creates it, perceives it and is influenced by it. It has not an essential existence. This particular viewpoint is called *Ajata Vada*. *Ajata* means "not born" or "not existing." This universe is not. Why do you complain of headaches when you have no head? Why do you become bound to the conditions of this universe, its good and evil, its success and failure? These are not. These are only visions of a dream: Just as in a dream we perceive many things, but the moment we wake up they all depart. This particular school of Monism denies the existence of this universe. You are not the body, nor the mind, nor the senses. You have neither birth nor death. You are neither male nor female. These are all false conceptions. You are dreaming of these endless things in your empty dream. You wake up and this dream shall depart once and for all time. Of course that is a very radical thought, but there is another school of Monism of a moderate type. According to it Brahman is both the efficient and the material cause. The followers do not deny the existence of the universe as it is, but they say if it is, it must be a part of Brahman. This is the process in which the universe exists: Just as the spider creates the web out of a material which is in itself, and then it rules that web—what we call a cobweb—again it can take the whole of the web into itself: Even so, this whole universe has come out of That, it exists in That and it will return into That. This is almost the first aphorism of Vedanta Philosophy by Vyasa. "The creation or birth of all this has come from That and it has its existence also in That and it will end in That." That is the alpha and omega of the whole process of existence. Not only that: "Just as the plants grow

on the earth almost spontaneously—just as hair grows on our body without any effort of consciousness on our part, even so this whole universe has grown on that infinite reality—Brahman." Brahman as the efficient cause, has created this all without any effort of consciousness. It is not an act of special creation. It is not what the theologian believes the only act of creation; it is a spontaneous creation. In this theory of creation Brahman does not create from will, or nothing, or from a pre-existent substance. It takes place spontaneously and repeats itself. The Vedantists illustrate this idea by the following example: Brahman is an infinite person, and the whole universe, I mean the universe of all worlds; nay, millions upon millions of universes like this universe, can lie in one pore of His body. The Vedantists have a wonderful idea of Eternity. Let me give another illustration: You have heard of the Himalayas—that vast range of mountains in the north of India. You take a handkerchief and rub the mountains with it from one end of the range to the other and then rub them back to the first end. Repeat that process. That time in which you will be able to wipe out all the mountains by that process—that time compared to Eternity is like a grain of sand in the Sahara desert. So it is an inconceivable condition. Truly has it been said: "The mind cannot comprehend it and speech cannot express it. Both return baffled from it."

Then the other theory, *Vignana Vada*, is idealism pure and simple. According to it this universe has come from something which is unmanifested and unthinkable, and it will return into that state again. It has existence only between them.

According to Buddha there is neither the past nor the

future but this present state alone exists. That is, this whole universe of thought and being is born every moment and it dies also every moment. That is why it is called the doctrine of momentary existence. This universe as it is at this moment is an entirely new condition and is entirely separate from the past and from the future. The future is not a causal consequent, nor the past a causal antecedent, but the whole stretch of existence is an idea of succession only. One succeeds the other but there is no causal unity or basic identity between these various forms. This moment is in itself an independent moment. It is not an effect or product of a past moment, and the moment that succeeds it is not its effect or product. But this theory as finally propounded by Buddha attaches greater importance to the series of successive moments than to causation, or the identity of cause and effect. Buddha, of course, was a great believer in the theory of evolution; he also believed in the theory of reincarnation, but he denied the existence of the soul as a permanent and persistent entity. According to him, our individual soul is nothing but the aggregate of thoughts and ideas at different moments. If you can take away these different moments then there shall exist nothing. This whole stretch of existence, individual as well as cosmic, is nothing but the sum total of existences at various moments. All these momentary manifestations exist only in the thought or will of man.

Now to sum up: You can ask this question most pertinently and intelligently: If in India you have all these various theories which are so different in their origins and methods, almost contradictory, how can you harmonize them? Yes, we can harmonize them on the principle which

is of course impersonal and eternal and infinite. That is, all things are possible in the infinite. In fact, the infinite is the meeting ground of all conflicting and contradictory ideas. Whatever arises in the mind of man, arises in a part of that infinite existence, and we have a right to think for ourselves and to propound our own theories. That is our natural right. Every person must think for himself, must have his own conception of God and the universe. He must also have an idea of his own self. Or he must try to know the cause of his existence, the purpose of his existence and the goal of his existence. So in the Hindu philosophy alone can we find a meeting ground of all these apparently opposing and contradictory theories or systems of thought. All those thinkers agreed to disagree. They never applied that most unjust and exclusive method to measure all things by one yardstick. That is, they let everybody have his own freedom and think out for himself the cause of his existence. As individuals we are all different from one another, but remember that the basic principle, or the common ground, is the same for all and for all time. If we can always remember that common ground, that basic principle, then we shall have no difficulty in harmonizing these almost contradictory theories and ideas explaining the truths of the outer as well as the inner natures—that is, the universe and man; macrocosm and microcosm.

“All has come from Brahman. All exists in Brahman. All will return into Brahman.” This is the declaration of the Vedas.

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NOTICE

The Summer recess of the Vedanta Society commences in the first week of July. The next season's work will be resumed in September, after Labor Day.

VEDANTA DARPANA

OR MIRROR OF VEDANTA

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"Om Bhuh, Bhuvah, Swah:
We meditate upon that Adorable Light
of the Deva who is their Creator.
May He lead our thoughts to Him!"

*Gayatri—the most Sacred
Hymn of the Vedas.*

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SELECTIONS FROM THE BHAGAVAD GITA

With Explanation

CHAPTER II

Sri Krishna asked Arjuna to perform his duties for their own sakes and not for the sake of gaining anything by their practice. To be able to do one's duties in that spirit of unselfishness one must be a Yogi. Therefore says Krishna, "Being firm in Yoga, renouncing attachment and being evenly impartial to both success and failure, do all thy works O, Arjuna! Such evenness of mind is Yoga." (Verses 48, Chap. II) "He who is endued with understanding leaves behind the results of both good and evil deeds here. Therefore, apply thyself to the practice of duty. Yoga is efficiency in the performance of works." (Verse 50, Chap. II).

There are two elements in this 'Yoga'. One is efficiency, i. e. ability to do, and the other non-attachment. The Karma Yogi must exert himself to the uttermost to perform his works well — he must devote the full measure of his energy, ability and intelligence to his works and this must be accompanied by non-attachment, i. e. freedom from desire for

results in any shape or form. "For those are pitiable creatures whose motive to action is the fruit of their works." (Verse 49, Chap. II). Work is an indifferent thing, but the disposition or the mental attitude of the worker makes it good or bad.

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SRI RAMAKRISHNA

AVADHUTA AND A KITE

It is said in the Bhagavat that Avadhuta made twenty-four Gurus. The kite was one of them. In a certain place some fishermen were catching fish, a kite swooped down and snatched a fish. Seeing the kite with the fish in its claws, hundreds of crows flew after him and began to caw, making a great noise. In whatever direction the kite flew, the crows followed. When he flew to the south, they pursued him; when he flew to the north, they were after him, and he found no peace in any direction. At last the kite dropped the fish. Then the crows flew after the fish and the kite rested calmly on the branch of a high tree. He thought within himself: "That fish was the cause of all this trouble. Now that I no longer have it, I am happy and in perfect peace." The Avadhuta learned from this kite that as long as a man is attached to worldly objects, so long he has toil, cares, anxiety, unrest and unhappiness. When attachment is gone, all works end, and then comes peace. But work without attachment is good; it does not bring unrest.

WORK AND ITS SECRET**A SPIRITUAL TALK BY SWAMI BRAHMANANDA****(Addressed to the Monks and Brahmacharins of the
Ramakrishna Mission)**

It is natural for a man to wish to do a great work. There are many who can do it. It is possible to be engaged in big works in order to shine in the footlights of public distinction. But the true nature of a man can best be judged by the thoroughness with which he does small works. That shows how his character has been formed. The real worker devotes his whole heart and soul to the work at hand however small it may be. He never does work to win applause from the public.

Anyone can do the work which he or she likes. But then it becomes almost impossible to do any work, for one cannot often find work to one's own liking. Our ideal should be to do any work to the best of our ability.

Work done in a mechanical way does not help much. We should be inspired by a noble ideal. Three-fourths of the mind should be devoted to God, and work should be performed with the remaining quarter. If you can discipline yourself in this way, then only will you be a real worker. Then alone, work will make your mind broad and you will find peace and happiness. If, on the other hand, you do the work but neglect your spiritual practices, you will be open to attachment and egoism. Such works create trouble, misunderstanding and disharmony with the co-workers. My dear children, never give up your spiritual practices whether you are devoted to welfare work or are engaged otherwise.

(By way of admonition to someone who broke a bottle).
This is not a favourable indication. It only shows that

when you do a work your mind wanders. Perhaps you have been thinking about a thousand things while doing some particular work. Nothing whatever—neither meditation nor work—is possible with such a restless mind. Every work—great or small—requires devotion and concentration. One who can concentrate his mind on work can also focus his attention on prayer and meditation.

The first thing necessary for the right performance of work is a great love for the work itself. Secondly, one should not speculate upon the result of the work. There lies the secret of success in work.

Do all your work knowing that you are an instrument in the hands of God. Every work is His work. Then you will not dislike any work. All your trouble is the result of dissociating God from the work. How can you realize your purpose either in work or meditation without God?

We also had to do much work and we regarded it as the will of God. Though monks, we had sometimes to go to the lawyers' chambers and courts, yet we knew it to be the will of the Lord. But I do not think that these things have produced any harmful effects upon us. We knew that these were all His works. We never undertook these works out of any selfish motive. The truth is that whatever you do for the sake of others is good. But even a good deed loses its merit if it is performed with selfishness, egoism or attachment.

Why are you so afraid of work? (Pointing to Swami Premananda who was one of the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna). Always obey them. It will benefit you if you follow their teachings. They are holy men, great souls.

If you disobey them through vanity you will lose everything, whether belonging to this world or the next. If you have the willingness to listen to them, I say it is your good fortune.

(To some workers who complained about the lack of time for meditation and prayer on account of their pre-occupation with famine relief work). Listen, children! These words are unbecoming to you. You are monks. You have controlled your senses. You have within you the strength that is the outcome of the practice of Brahmacharya (continence). You must perform everything at its time—meditation, prayer and the other duties of life. "Oh, we are tired of work!" — words like these may be the words of an ordinary man. The fact is that you have no interest in spiritual practices. You like excitement and you waste your time on vain talk. Your plea of the want of time for meditation is a mere excuse for not doing it.

(Translated from the Bengali Magazine, "Udbodhan").

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CONFUCIUS AND HIS PHILOSOPHY

By the Editor

China defies the world in three things, — her age, population, and industries. The Chinese come from the Turanian race, that migrated from Western Asia and settled on the banks of the Hoang-Ho 4,000 years before Christ. The recorded history of China goes as far back as that age and her civilization is one of the oldest in the world. The Chinese population is over 400,000,000, or more than one-fourth of the whole human race. Chinese industries are

famous all over the world. The Wall of China is one of the great wonders of the world. It was built in the third century B. C., to protect the country against invasions. It is 1,200 miles long, twenty-five feet high, and broad enough to permit six horsemen to ride abreast. It is said that "in it there is enough material to build a belt six feet high and two feet wide that would reach twice around the world."

The Chinese are the most moral nation in the world. In China there is only one criminal in every 3,787; while in Scotland, one of the most civilized Christian countries, one in every sixty is a criminal. Among Mohammedans one is a criminal in every 856.

In China only one is a criminal in every 3,787 of the masses and still your people send missionaries to China. You who have read Chinese history will recall how it is said that in spite of the preceding Greek and Roman civilizations and 1300 years of Christian teaching, Europe in the fourteenth century was 2000 years behind the China of Confucius. You may have also read how the Prime Minister of China, during the opium war over seventy years ago, wrote to Queen Victoria, imploring her not to import opium into China — an article she would not have introduced into her own country. He said, in part; "We think you are a good and gracious Queen, but why do you want to do that to others which you would not have done to yourself?" This was one of the first teachings of Confucius and the Chinese endeavor to live up to it. Confucius was born in 551 B. C., in the State of Loo. The sixth century B. C. is a remarkable period in the history of the world. It saw the birth of Buddha in India, of Pythagoras in Greece, and of Confucius in China. Royalty

was abolished in Rome in 509 B. C., the last Roman king, Lucius Tarquinius Superbus, being deposed and driven out in that year. Democracy was established in Greece, and the Jews were delivered from the Babylonian captivity by the Persian Emperor, Cyrus the Great, in this same century.

The father of Confucius, Shoooh Leang Hie, was a military officer. He was a man of Herculean strength. Report says that once, when his men besieged a city, the gates were purposely thrown open to entice them in, and as soon as they entered the portcullis dropped. But Shoooh Leang Hie by his giant force raised it and held it up until all were out and thus saved them from instant death.

When seventy years old he married a second time. He was a widower and had nine daughters, but he thought of perpetuating himself through a son. He went to the family of Yen (one of the most respectable Chinese families) and applied for a daughter. There were three marriageable girls but the age of the suitor was against him. The father, Yen, interceded for the noble man and pointed out to his daughters the virtues that adorned his hoary head. He said: "He is old and austere, but you need have no misgivings about him; which of you will have him?" The older daughters answered not a word, but the youngest maiden, Chingtsze said: "Why do you ask us, father? It is for you to determine." "Very well," said her father in reply, "you will do it." She accordingly married Shoooh Leang Hie and within a year there was born to her the now world-renowned reformer, Confucius.

When Confucius was three years old his father died. His mother was a very clever and good woman. She devoted

all her energies to the training of her son. At fifteen he had learned all that his masters were able to teach him. When seventeen, he accepted the position of magistrate and revenue collector in an agricultural district. At the request of his mother he married when nineteen. He had a son and a daughter. The duties of office required his separation from his wife after four years of marriage. His mother died when he was twenty-three years old. He resigned his position and shut himself up in his house to spend in solitude the three years of mourning for his mother. This was the custom in that country. He spent these years in study and contemplation. Then he traveled through the country. Two distinct periods of his life were spent in travels. In these wanderings he used to be accompanied by three disciples. He divided his disciples into four classes. To the first he taught morals, to the second rhetoric, to the third politics, and to the fourth the style of written composition. Confucius was a great moral and political reformer; he was not a religious teacher. His old contemporary, Lao-Tze, was an ascetic and his teachings were mystic, monistic and transcendental, while those of Confucius were dualistic, agnostic and practical. He taught practical ethics.

When he was traveling one day he saw an old woman weeping by a tomb. He sent one of the disciples to inquire the cause. She said her husband, father-in-law and son were killed by a tiger in that place. The disciple said, "Why don't you then remove from here?" The woman replied, "Because here there is no oppressive government." On hearing this from the disciple, Confucius

remarked, "An oppressive government is really fiercer than a tiger." Another time, when visiting statues in a royal palace, he saw a big metal statue of a man with a triple clasp on the mouth. On the back of the statue were inscribed these words: "The ancient people spoke little and like them we should avoid loquacity. Many words invite many defeats. Those who talk much are sure to say something it would be better to have left unsaid." He drew the attention of the disciples to these words and said, "Observe, my children, these words are true and commend themselves to our reason." On another occasion he arrived at the summit of a mountain and, looking below, he heaved a heavy sigh as of pain. The disciples inquired the cause and he sadly said: "My children, looking from this height on people below, I find they are continually running after worldly pursuits and trying to get ahead of each other. There is scarcely one who is not thinking how he can best gain advantage over, and if necessary destroy, his neighbor. Sadder still is it to be incapable and helpless to remedy the evil. You have probably thought this matter over. Tell me in turn what you would do if you had the power." One of them replied: "I would defend the weak and the oppressed and, if necessary, would conquer and execute the oppressor and thus establish right and order." "You speak as a soldier," Confucius quietly commented. The second disciple then said: "I would throw myself between the contending parties and dilate on the horrors of war and blessings of peace, the ignominy of defeat and the miseries brought on the bereaved widows and orphans and thus establish peace." "You are an orator," said Confucius. The third, after much reluctance, gave his opinion: "I

would, if possible, educate and elevate these people by my life and example." "You speak like a sage," was the master's reply.

When fifty-one years old, Confucius obtained a splendid position in his native State of Loo. He was appointed Minister of Crime by the Duke of that State. He discharged his duties so ably and well that crime practically ceased. Dr. Legge says, "The penal laws lay unused, for no offenders appeared. Dishonesty and dissoluteness were ashamed and hid their heads." This prince was very much devoted to Confucius. About this time he had among his disciples 500 mandarins. But the prosperity and success of this State awakened the jealousy and fears of the Duke of the neighboring State, Tsze. He at first tried various methods to turn the Duke of Loo from his able minister but all these failed. At last he devised a plan which succeeded. He sent a present of eighty beautiful maidens to the Duke of Loo whose duty it was to recall the Duke from interest in public duties to the enjoyment of personal pleasures. The Duke now listened to his minister with scant attention. His suggestions were neglected, his advice was spurned. Confucius was too high-spirited a man to accept such treatment, yet he was loath to resign a post that enabled him to do so much good to his country. But he could not stand idly by and see the Duke openly defy the laws and treat him with contempt. He finally resigned his post and left the capital.

He then recommenced his travels. But this time his wanderings were unpropitious and he was not appreciated. State after State refused him appointment. At last, when sixty-nine years old, he returned to Loo and devoted the

remaining few years of his life to the completion of his literary works and teaching disciples. Confucius died when seventy-two years old (in 479 B. C.). He was buried with great pomp and multitudes observed mourning for three years. The Empress of the Shun dynasty erected a marble statue on his grave, which bore this inscription: "The most sagely ancient Teacher. The all-accomplished and all-informed King." The eighteenth day of the second moon is kept sacred by the Chinese as the anniversary of his death. A few days before his death his son and a favorite disciple died. He was saddened by these bereavements and one morning, rising from his bed, he said:

"The great mountain must crumble,
The strong beam must break,
The wise man withers away as a plant."

The same evening he took sick and in a few days died.

Confucius was silent on all theological and metaphysical questions. To all such questions his one reply was: "Do your duty." He did not localize or recognize heaven, hell or purgatory. The Chinese word for 'heaven' is *Shangte*, which means neither a person nor a place, but the universal spirit or life—or the law that governs all things. To him the universe was a stupendous mechanism. He did not believe in special creation.

Once a disciple asked him about the service of the spirits of the dead. Confucius said, "While you are not able to serve men alive, how can you serve their spirits?" The disciple then asked about death and the master's answer was: "While you do not know life, how can you know about death?"

Confucius left no theology; He had great veneration for ancient customs and usages. According to him upon the observance of the laws of five fundamental relationships all social and political well-being and happiness depend. Those are between the sovereign and the subject, between the parent and the child, between brother and brother, between friend and friend, and between husband and wife. If these relations are rightly observed and the duties appertaining to them are properly performed, then all happiness in individual and social life follows.

A disciple asked, "Is there not one word which may serve as a rule of practice for all one's life?" Confucius said, "Yes; it is 'reciprocity'—What you do not want done to yourself do not do to others."

Confucius inculcated practice of virtues and not the observance of ceremonies only. He laid down five virtues as cardinal which must be practised that right may prevail. These virtues are (1) Humanity (Love and charity towards all); (2) Impartial justice; (3) Conformity to ancient rites, laws and usages; (4) Rectitude of intention; (5) Sincerity.

Confucius was a great writer. For centuries his writings comprised the literature of China. He wrote five books (called "Classics"); these with four others written by him and his followers form Chinese literature.

The original name of this sage was Kong-Futze (Kong—the master). Kong-Futze was Latinized into Confucius by the Jesuit missionaries in the 16th. Century A. D.

The Emperor of China used to visit the tomb of Confucius twice a year, knelt and bowed his head before it, invoked blessings and made offerings. So tremendous is the influence of the teachings of Confucius in China and

so highly is his memory held by the Chinese that even little children sing every day:

"Confucius! Confucius! How great was Confucius!

Before him there was none like him!

Since him there has been no other."

Confucius was confessedly a great and good man—an intellectual giant. He never claimed to be an "original thinker or maker but a transmitter." He strove to direct the attention of men to the duties of social and political life in the most unassuming way. "I teach you nothing," he said, "but what you might learn for yourselves." He aimed exclusively at fitting people for conducting themselves honorably and prudently in life.

Confucius neither spoke nor knew of any *Vox Dei*, neither feared nor flattered *Vox Populi*.

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QUESTION AND ANSWER

Q. You once said that there is such a thing as "Depression Profiteering." Will you kindly explain it to me?

A. Everybody is more or less affected by the financial crisis which has spread over the whole world. The duty of a man at this time is to help his fellowman in every possible way. Perhaps it is reasonable, if not right, for the people of moderate means to reduce their expenditures or, as they say, "to cut their coat according to their cloth." But there are many rich people in the world who are taking a mean advantage of this situation. It is not necessary for them to reduce their expenditures or to retrench the salaries of their employes, or even to discharge some of them. If these people had a better civic and economic sense and a larger understanding of humanity, instead of

doing that, they would increase their salaries and employ many more people than they had before.

These people may have lost a part of their principal and also of their income, but they have still enough wealth to share with others, if not by actual giving for nothing which is called charity, but by retaining their staff of employes at their usual salaries for the sake of the economic welfare of their community, or country, or the world.

This method which these selfish rich people are using is nothing more or less than "Depression Profiteering." By pursuing it they will in the longer run really lose materially as a moral retribution for their sordidness and selfishness, while they have already lost or are losing now, the genuine interest, respect and good will of the employes whose salaries have been reduced and who have been discharged. This latter loss is more damaging and serious than the former. But these people do not understand it.

They are indeed whetting their knives "not upon their soles but upon their souls."

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REPORT

The Season's work of the Vedanta Society commenced Sunday, Nov. 1st, 1931. Swami Nikhilananda preached the first sermon. His theme was "Vedanta and World Peace." The last lecture of the season was given by Swami Bodhananda on June 26th, 1932. There were altogether thirty-five Sunday lectures and thirty-six classes during the season. The meetings were fairly well-attended and the whole season's work was satisfactory.

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AN EXPLANATION OF THE VEDANTA SYMBOL

By **SWAMI BODHANANDA**

Many people have enquired lately about the meaning of the Vedanta Symbol which we print on the first cover page of the Vedanta Darpana.

This symbol was designated by our great master, Swami Vivekananda. There are five entities in it: (1) The Lake, (2) The Lotus, (3) The Sun, (4) The Swan and (5) The Serpent.

In fact it is an illustration of the awakening of the Kundalini—the coiled-up energy in man. This energy lies dormant in ordinary individuals, in the space between the navel, the rectum and the genital. By practice of Yoga as taught by great gurus (masters), this energy is aroused in the Yogi. It then forces open the closed end of the Susumna Canal at the basic plexus (Muladhara Chakra) and rises up slowly along that canal up to the pineal gland (Sahasrara Chakra). When the Yogi achieves this result (the rousing and raising of the Kundalini) he becomes Siddha—Perfected.

Simultaneously with the achievement he perceives—nay realizes within himself—this remarkable phenomenon represented by the Symbol. The Lake stands for the mind: It becomes calm and tranquil. * The Lotus is the image of the heart. The Sun is the symbol of spiritual illumination, and the Swan represents the presence of the Blissful Soul in the blooming lotus of the heart. This experience makes him a Siddha Purusha—Perfected Soul. He then dwells eternally in the region where there is no night, but all light. He becomes Jyotirmaya—Illumined. *

VEDANTA DĀRPAṆA

OR

MIRROR OF VEDANTA

—oOo—
"Om Bhuh, Bhuvah, Swah:
We meditate upon that Adorable Light
of the Deva who is their Creator.
May He lead our thoughts to Him!"
Gayatri—the most Sacred
Hymn of the Vedas.

Vol. II.

SEPTEMBER, 1932

No. 9

SELECTIONS FROM THE BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ

With Explanation

CHAPTER II.

There are eighteen chapters in the Bhagavad Gita. Each is a discourse upon a certain branch or method of "Yoga." The word Yoga has a very wide connotation in Sanskrit. It means: (1) Addition, (2) Mixture, (3) Sum total of causes, (4) Military training, (5) Rational argumentation, (6) Method of making the body healthy and strong, (7) Elocution, (8) Skill or efficiency, (9) Equability of the mind, (10) Solution of a problem by thought, (11) Transmutation, (12) Control of the modifications of the mind, (13) Dhyana or concentration, (14) Samadhi or absorption in meditation, (15) Union of the Soul and Brahman, and so forth.

It is derived from the root 'yuj' to join. The Saxon word 'yoke' owes its origin to this root. Its general implication is union or attainment. In the Scriptures it is used in the sense of Divine Realization. It means both the method and the state of such Realization.

The title of the Second Chapter is Samkhya Yoga. This word Samkhya as used in this discourse has hardly any bearing upon the celebrated Samkhya Philosophy of Kapila. It means knowledge of the nature of the soul.

There are three distinct parts in this discourse. In the first Sri Krishna describes the Immortality of the Soul. In the second he differentiates between Samkhya Buddhi and Yoga Buddhi. The former relates to the philosophic comprehension of the nature of the soul, and the latter to the application of that knowledge in action.

In the third part he presents a concrete example of the combination of these two kinds of Buddhi. In it he describes the characteristics of a "Sthita Pragna," literally a Yogi of firm and steady wisdom.

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SRI RAMAKRISHNA: Story of the Wishing-Tree

God is like the Divine-Tree (Kalpa-taru), which gives whatever one asks of it. So one should be careful to give up all worldly desires when one's mind has been purified by religious exercises. Just hear a story:—A certain traveler came to a large plain in the course of his travel. As he had been walking in the sun for a good many hours, he was thoroughly exhausted and was heavily perspiring; so he sat down in the shade of a tree to take a little rest. Presently he began to think what a comfort it would be could he but get a soft bed there to sleep upon. The traveler had no idea that he was sitting under a Divine-Tree. As soon as the above thought arose in his mind, he found a nice bed by his side. He felt very much astonished, but all the same stretched himself on it. Now he thought to himself how pleasant it would be were a young damsel to come there and gently stroke his legs. No sooner had the thought arisen in his mind than he found a young damsel sitting near his feet and stroking his legs.

The traveler felt supremely happy. Presently he felt very hungry and thought within himself: "I got whatever I have wished for; could I not then get some food?" Instantly he found various kinds of delicious food spread before him. He at once fell to eating and then, having helped himself to his heart's content, stretched himself again on his bed. He now began to revolve in his mind the events of the day. While thus occupied he thought to himself; "If a tiger should attack me all of a sudden!" In an instant a large tiger jumped upon him, broke his neck and began to drink his blood. In this way the traveler lost his life. Such is the fate of men in general. If during your meditation you pray for men or money or worldly honors, your desires are no doubt satisfied to some extent, but, mind, there is the dread of the tiger behind the gifts you get. Those tigers — disease, bereavements, loss of honor and wealth, etc. — are a thousand times more terrible than the live tiger.

* * * * *

RIGHT FOOD, PLACE, TIME AND DISPOSITION FOR YOGA PRACTICE

By the Editor

To the true Yogi the practice of Yoga is the most precious and sacred duty. He makes all his works subservient to his practice. He does not consider any gain more precious or valuable than that which is attained by the right practice of Yoga. By the exercise of discrimination, dispassion and devotion, by determination and firm conviction, he knows how to reach the goal. Buddha possessed that determination and you all know how the night before attaining Nirvana, he made that solemn resolve: "I shall not move

an inch from this *asana*, this seat of mine, whether I live or die, without attaining Nirvāṇa." The result of that determination was that he attained Nirvāṇa that night. So we must always practice our religious exercises with that hopeful thought, firm conviction and solemn determination. "Either attain the goal or die in the attempt." That must be our disposition in the practice of Yoga.

Although statements such as "a man is what he eats"—"one's sarcophagus is shaped by what one puts into one's esophagus"—are extravagant, yet there is a great deal of truth in them. Of course it is not true that if a man eats potatoes he becomes a potato, or if a man eats a piece of lamb-chop he becomes a sheep, but what we derive from assimilation of food and drink influences our thought. Man is a composite of three entities. He has a body, he has a mind and he has a spirit. Unfortunately, he is more conscious of the body than of the other two entities, and that is the reason why he devotes most of his time and thought to the perfection of the body. "Man does not live by bread alone, but by thoughts from God." Some people feed and nourish one part of their self only—perhaps the most unimportant — the physical body. Of course, foods for the physical body are solid and liquid substances like bread, butter and milk. We must not live to eat, to support and nourish this physical self only, but we must eat to live. With most people the greatest object of life is to eat. But the Yogi does not live to eat, he eats to live; so that the body and soul may be together, he must support the body.

What is the food for the mind? Calmness, control, cheerfulness, freedom from discontent, despondency and

depression. And what is the food for the spirit? Divine communion. That is, the realization that the soul and the over-soul are one.

The Upanishad lays down this rule for food: "When the food becomes clean and pure, then the *Sattva* element, the thought, also becomes clean and pure, and from that purity comes the purity of knowledge." That is, by purity of food the mind, thought and knowledge become steady and firm.

What is the meaning of the word '*Ahara*'? This word has a very wide connotation. It means that which is taken in. In Sanskrit the root of *hri*, to take. That is, what is assimilated whether by the body, or the senses, or the mind, or the soul, is food. When this food becomes clean and pure then the *sattva* element in us also becomes clean and pure, and the result of that cleanliness is the firmness of understanding. This last phase has been very much emphasized by Krishna in the Gita. He has asked Arjuna again and again to find a firm rest in *Buddhi* — understanding. Again he says: "He who is endued with *Buddhi*, with right thought, right spirit and right disposition, indeed knows how to overcome all pairs of opposites like good and evil, success and failure." And he who possesses that right understanding, that firm conviction and steady mind, he alone can remain free from the disturbing forces of all these pairs of opposites. A man who is not a *Yogi*, an ordinary man, when he meets with success cannot endure the result of it. He becomes proud. He often forgets his former conditions and relations. He naturally thinks he has become somebody and the rest of the world must bow to him. So we see how injurious that achievement is. Again, when he meets with failure or misfortune he naturally becomes depressed or

despondent. All these opposites, be they good or bad, exert a tremendous force upon us and only he who possesses calmness of disposition can remain unaffected by them. In the lessons of the Gita, Krishna has put before us a very noble conception of Yoga, the philosophy of conduct. By the word Yoga he does not mean a system of Stoicism that makes us apathetic and indifferent to all the interests of life. Of course, it is a right thing to retire from time to time from the hustle and bustle of this world, and live in seclusion or solitude, to develop poise or right thought. That is only a means, but not the end. He who can live in this world as well as in the solitude, with right disposition and firmness of understanding — a firmness which cannot be shaken by the worst calamity, even by death — that man is a real Yogi. To this point I shall return later.

In the matter of food we have to observe three rules. Food must be wholesome, moderate and clean. In the seventeenth chapter of the Gita, Krishna has described three kinds of food: *Sattvika*, *Rajasika* and *Tamasika*. The three primal elements, *Sattva* — goodness, *Rajas* — action, and *Tamas* — inertia, enter into the composition of all things and entities that we meet around us. In fact, this desk is nothing but a composite of those three elements; a man's mind also is a composite of those three elements; the senses are also a composite of those three elements. 'They enter in different proportions into the composition of all things and thoughts. Our thought also consists of those three elements of nature. In our body, for instance, if we analyze it anatomically and physiologically, we will find the presence in different proportions of those three elements and if we analyze all other things we will likewise discover the presence of those three

elements in different proportions. Our Hindu philosophers who are also scientists, have determined by the process of analysis and synthesis that all these various things representing various modes and forms can be finally reduced to one substance and that is *Prakṛiti*. That means that fundamentally and finally there is no substantial difference between one thing and another, between one person and another. The difference lies only in the degree of manifestations and not in kind. There is the same *Prakṛiti* behind them all. A person is called *Sattvikā*, good, when in him the *Sattva* element preponderates over the other two elements. A man in whom the element of passion, *Rajas* is greater than the other two elements is called *Rajasikā*. A *Tamasikā* man is naturally dull and stupid. In him the element of inertia is present in a larger degree than the elements of *Sattva* and *Rajas*.

In the matter of food also we have to consider that particular rule. Thus our food consists of those three elements and according to our predominant tendency we have natural desires for those three kinds of food. For instance, a man who is of the element of goodness, naturally is fond of *Sattvikā* food. A man who is of the element of passion is desirous of *Rajasikā* food; and a man who is of *Tamasikā* nature likes to eat *Tamasikā* food. I am going to read and explain those three verses where Krishna has described those three kinds of food.

“The foods which increase life, promote energy, strength, vigor and health, produce joy and cheerfulness, are oleaginous, delightful, agreeable, are dear to men of the quality of goodness. The foods that are bitter, sour, saline, pungent, dry,

burning, are liked by men of the quality of passion. Foods which are cold, tasteless, putrid, rotten and impure are dear to those who are of the attribute of *Tamas* — inertia or dullness."

In his discourse upon the three kinds of food, Krishna has not let out of his scope this great psychological factor which I have already indicated to you: "like attracts like." That is, those people who are naturally *Sattvika* have fondness for *Sattvika* food. They are attracted by those foods and those are naturally dear to them. Those who possess calmness, cheerfulness, normal health and strength, are naturally fond of *Sattvika* foods, foods that produce health and strength and the power of concentration and meditation. If you force a man of the quality of *Rajas*, for instance, to live upon a diet of *Sattva*, then you will do him injustice—because he naturally needs the *Rajasika* food and by application of force you cannot make him like the other food. That explains why this Prohibition law has proved a failure. In the people there is the desire for drinks, alcoholic products, and by the force of the law they cannot remove their desires. They are all the time present in them. But if this desire is wiped out by right understanding, then they will naturally abstain from them. They must learn to appreciate and enjoy higher realities and modes of living.

Once a fisherman went out to sell his fish at a distant market and when he was returning home he was caught in a storm. He found a house nearby with a porch all around. He came there but the storm did not abate and he was obliged to stay there all night. But that poor man could not sleep because, in the first place, that house wa

very quiet; and then there were beautiful flowers around the house, and the odor of the flowers was too much for him. He could not bear the odor and thus could not sleep. Then at two or three o'clock in the night he thought if he could smell the odor of his fish basket perhaps he could sleep. So he brought the fish basket and put it near his bed, and when he smelled the fish odor he went to sleep at once. That exactly is our nature. If you speak about God and religion and Yoga to a man who is not ready for it, he will be bored, he cannot stand that talk, he feels uneasy in that atmosphere, he will leave at once. Knowing that, Krishna and other teachers have prescribed these various foods, but mark my words, these different foods are for people belonging to these different *gunas* — qualities.

The idea of disposition is described also in the sixth chapter of the Gita. How beautiful those teachings are. That is, when we study them we find a great psychological truth permeating them all. This religion that the Western peoples have in their own countries — Christianity — is nothing but a set of doctrines or dogmas, and they try to impose them upon all people, whether they are willing to take them or not. But in these lessons we find the other method. Nothing can be forced upon a person who is not ready to receive it or respond to it. That is the reason why in India we do not have that foolish custom of conversion. "A man converted against his will is of the same opinion still." But we try to unfold the spirit from within. That is Yoga and that is religion.

One must not eat excessively; one must not eat too much at a time, and one must not eat too little either. One must not sleep too long at a time, and one must not keep

awake too long. All those excesses indicate physical unsoundness. Whoever is given to excesses is physically abnormal, and for that reason Krishna advocates the practice of moderation in all habits of life. The extremists are wrong. Truth lies between the extremes. In Yoga philosophy we find this suggestion in regard to moderation. "Fill half of the stomach with solid food and one-fourth with liquid food; and one-fourth of the stomach must be left unloaded." What a sensible advice is that!

Food becomes unclean through three causes: First is *Jati*—kind of food. There are certain species of food that are naturally unclean by their odors and by their appearances. I think meat is not a wholly clean food. It does not look clean.

The second cause is *Ashraya*, which means the source or association of the food. You may say this is a queer idea, but those who are of the quality of *Sattva*, those who are spiritually clean and calm can feel the effect of it. That is, if a person's thought is unclean, if his body is unclean and if he touches the food, then the food becomes unclean. He may wear, as your waiters in the hotels do, a very clean white coat, but he may have just returned from the toilet without washing his hands well. So when you eat that sort of food, food touched by that man, you become unclean. Not only is it impure in a material sense, but it produces an evil effect upon your mind. That is the reason why in India, before we cook our meals we take a bath. The cleanest place next to the Chapel is the kitchen. The cook is supposed to have clean thoughts. When you cook your food, if you have any angry or jealous thought in your mind, or if you are in a depressed mood, you naturally impart a part of your

thought through your body to the food. You may say that is a queer idea, but as I have admitted, only those people who are very clean physically and mentally can perceive that effect.

The third cause is called *Nimitta*, the external contact like that of dust or hair or a fly. When anything like that falls upon your food or is mixed with it, if you eat that food the result will be sickness of the body and also sickness of the mind. That does not produce the right condition for meditation and contemplation.

This matter of food is a very important thing. You know how Napoleon at the battle of Waterloo made a great misjudgment or mistake. The night before his surrender he ate something which caused him indigestion, and the next day he could not think rightly. He was a genius in his own work, but because of that sickness he had, he made the mistake. And we often do that. That is the reason why I have told you that the seeker who really loves his Yoga practice, who knows it is a very beautiful and sacred thing, makes all these conditions favorable to his practice. He knows if he eats something indigestible it will cause him sickness and he cannot practice his meditation. Furthermore, he observes these four rules: The right kind of food, the right interval between meals, the right combination and the right mastication. Certain ingredients carelessly combined produce bad results. You must know a little of chemistry to make right combinations.

I believe that if we eat only two meals, one heavy and one light, we can derive enough nourishment from them. Sometimes people who do not know how to assimilate the material food eat two or three pounds of beef at one meal

or take two quarts of drink, like wine. They think that way they can get all the nourishment for their body. I am reminded of an incident which happened in the garden where Sri Ramakrishna lived. There was a sort of prize fight between two wrestlers, and one of them lived in that temple. This man was of the quality of *Sattva*. He was a wrestler, but he did not live for the body only. He was a spiritual man. He used to spend every day some time in meditation and prayer. The other man was *Rajasika*. For several days before that contest he fed upon three or four pounds of meat each day, so that he might be in the right physical condition to win the contest. The other ate his simple vegetarian meals. And you will be surprised to know that he defeated his opponent and obtained the prize.

There must be at least eight hours between two meals and never eat unless you are hungry. Many people eat because of the habit to eat. You have to eat your breakfast at eight o'clock whether you are hungry or not. That is not only a mistake, I think that is a sin.

Then the right mastication. You have to chew the food to a liquid pulp. Even when you drink milk, put it into the mouth for two minutes after each sip, because the saliva of the mouth really digests the milk. Many stories are told of deaths from the drinking of a glass of milk hastily.

Foods that are agreeable to certain individuals because of their peculiarities, idiosyncrasies and natural desire may not be so to others. It is a wrong thing to ask any person to eat things that are not agreeable to him or her. Every person must know what food to eat by his own experience. I can tell about myself. If I take at one meal a full glass of milk, that causes gas in my stomach. Sometimes it gives

me a sort of colic. But if I eat, for instance, two apples, that does not give me any trouble. I knew a great physician in India who could easily digest two pounds of oily fish, like shad, with absolute impunity but he could not digest an ounce of milk. Those people who by their own experience have discovered that milk agrees with them, let them live on a milk diet. And others who think that other foods agree with them, let them use those foods. We must not forget that great rule in this respect.

The question of meat diet is often raised. It is still a point of dispute whether meat actually can produce nitrogen or protein that we need for our physical health. Any chemist can tell you that some beans contain more nitrogenous parts than beef or mutton. I think lentils contain 40% and mutton 35% nitrogen. Those people who have the notion that they can get calories and vitamins and nitrogen from meat, can find substitutes for it, and more wholesome ones, in nuts, fruits and cereals. And then again, those who can abstain from meat-eating, have the satisfaction of knowing that animals are not killed for them in the slaughter houses. They can have a clean conscience anyhow.

Then, what is the food for the mind? Control, calmness—When the food becomes clean, and the body has been made a perfect instrument by eating clean, wholesome and moderate foods, the mind naturally becomes concentrated, cheerful and calm. Then the soul also gets in tune with the infinite spirit.

What is the right place for the practice of Yoga? Three places are recommended for the practice of Yoga: First, the forest retreat or *tapovana*. The second place is the Chapel. The third place is the mind. He who can practice Yoga in

the mind is the best Yogi. Of course, after he has practised Yoga in those other places, in the retreat and in the secluded corner of the sanctum, he develops the power of natural concentration. He can concentrate all the time, whether walking or sleeping or shopping. We must all have that right disposition which Krishna calls "Buddhi."

"Let the Yogi try constantly to keep the mind steady, remaining in seclusion, alone, with the mind and body controlled and free from desire, and having no attachment." When the mind develops that disposition, then we become all the time calm and cheerful. We become free from all distraction, depression and doubt, and abundant light is thrown upon our path of further advancement.

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q. Do you think always keeping in mind "we are the pure and perfect self" will be a great help?

A. Oh! Yes, that is the best meditation.

Q. Will a time come when he will not be hurt by others' thoughts and deeds?

A. Yes, by power of thought we can remain unaffected by external influences. Be positive and strong.

Q. Are some people sensitive?

A. Yes, it is an obstacle to be overcome. What comes from without cannot make one free. Know but don't be affected by external conditions. Negative sensitiveness is bad. It leads to disastrous consequences.

Q. What causes depression?

A. It is caused by weakness and ignorance. It is a negative condition. Because we have not obtained what we desire, we feel distressed and depressed. Shake off all attachment.

Q. Do you think by not caring whether you died or not, it would bring the time of death nearer?

A. No, you would not mind. All people die; the great difference is that to the Yogi death is painless, but to others it is painful. The Yogi regards death as a passage from the finite to the infinite. He does not fear death, nor does he seek it. Those who fear death really die. In fact they die even before the actual death. The Yogi cares neither for life upon earth nor death. He lives in Eternity, whether he exists in the body or passes out of it. I am inclined to believe that by not caring whether we died or lived we can prolong our life instead of bringing the time of death nearer.

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R E P O R T

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In last autumn the Vedanta Society installed a new heating plant in its premises. This has greatly improved the condition of the house. The new Eighth Avenue Subway lines will soon commence operations. There will be a station at the 71st Street corner only a few doors from the house. That will make the place even more accessible than it is now.

July and August will be our vacation months. The next season's work will be resumed in September after Labor Day. Any one wishing to visit the society or have an interview with Swami Bodhananda will be welcome during the vacation period.

VEDANTA DĀRPANA

OR MIRROR OF VEDANTĀ

—800—

"Om Bhuh, Bhuvah, Swah:
We meditate upon that Adorable Light
of the Deva who is their Creator.
May He lead our thoughts to Him!"
Gayatri—the most Sacred
Hymn of the Vedas.

Vol. II.

OCTOBER, 1932

No. 10

SELECTIONS FROM THE BHAGAVAD GITA

With Explanation

CHAPTER II

In the 11th. verse of the second Chapter, Sri Krishna begins his discourse upon the Immortality of the Soul.

"You are grieving for those who do not deserve grief and speaking much about words of wisdom. But the really wise men grieve neither for those who have lost their lives nor for those who are still alive."

Sri Krishna did not see consistency between Arjuna's utterances and action. While he was arguing as a sage he was acting contrarily to the wisdom of a sage. To Sri Krishna Arjuna's words were only platitudes.

No man living or dead, wise or ignorant, need be grieved over. For the real man — the Soul — is immortal. It is only through our ignorance that we mourn when somebody passes on. The soul which is the essence of one's existence is neither born nor dies.

This conception of the immortality of the Soul is remarkably unique. By immortality Sri Krishna meant eternity, immateriality, unchangeability and incorporeality.

The Soul exists from everlasting to everlasting. It is not born with the birth of the body nor does it die with its death. It can never be affected by the qualities and con-

ditious of matter. It dwells in the body; but is eternally separate from it and all its changes.

The body is no better representative of the Soul than a garment is of the body.

* * * * *

SRI RAMAKRISHNA

The Meaning of Om.

Mahima: Revered Sir, A-u-m means creation, preservation and destruction.

Ramakrishna: But for me it is like the sound d-o-n-g of a big bell, which is at first audible, then inaudible, and ultimately melts away into infinite space. So the phenomenal melts away into the Absolute; the gross, subtle and causal states lose themselves in the Great Cause, the Absolute; the waking, dream and dreamless-sleep states become merged into the fourth state, Samadhi. When the bell sounds, it creates waves like those in the ocean when a heavy stone is thrown into it. From the Absolute phenomena come out; from the same Absolute, which is the great First Cause, have also evolved the gross, subtle and causal bodies. From the same Absolute, again, which is the fourth state, come the other three states of consciousness. The waves of the ocean are once more dissolved in the ocean. By this illustration of d-o-n-g I show that the eternal word Om is symbolic of the evolution and involution of phenomena from and into the Absolute. I have *seen* all these things. My Divine Mother has shown me that in the infinite ocean of the Absolute waves rise and again merge into it. In that infinite spiritual space millions of planets and worlds rise and are dissolved. I do not know what is written in your books; I have *seen* all this.

THE PROBLEM OF PEACE (A Hindu Viewpoint)

By SWAMI NIKHILANANDA

Vedanta is the Religious Philosophy of the Hindus. At the very outset the Vedantist would like to remove one great misconception. He thinks that the most fascinating fruit of the Tree of Illusion is the Ideal of Permanent Universal Peace in a relative world. This is a contradiction in terms; for, creation means lost balance. In a state of perfect harmony or equilibrium no creation is possible. A machine cannot go on for a second if all the wheels in it are smooth and without teeth. The coming to grips of different wheels and their friction make the movement of a machine possible. The world would cease to exist the moment it attained the ideal of perfect harmony. The Kingdom of Heaven on Earth, the Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of Man, Eternal Progress, Millennium, etc. are but dreams of the idealists which will forever remain unrealized.

The individual alone can realize the ideal of Perfect Peace. By spiritual discipline and personal effort, he can remove the cobwebs of his own misunderstanding, hatred and malice, which are the fruitful cause of all strife and quarrel. It is also possible for the world to improve its present condition a great deal by minimizing the chances of friction. Regarding this most desired consummation, Vedanta gives some definite suggestions. Before stating



these, it is necessary to examine, in brief, the various efforts made by humanity to attain this goal.

The problem of peace is an old problem in the world. Politics, Economics, Science and Religion, each in turn has offered its solution to lessen the *sturm und drang* of human life. But all these hypothetical solutions have proved, as we shall presently see, eggregious failures.

People cherished the idea that an adjustment of political machinery would put an end to all wars. Julius Caesar, Alexander and Napoleon dreamt of establishing a world empire in which all people could live like brothers under the paternal care of a common Emperor. That these expectations have proved futile is the verdict of history. At the beginning of the modern era, Europe believed that a Balance of Power between the different states would prevent any single nation from becoming a menace to the weaker nations. This theory of the Balance of Power, carried to its logical conclusion, has reduced Europe to a number of armed camps where each nation maintains a condition of high military efficiency in order to ward off any danger of surprise by a hostile neighbor. The whole of European soil is strewn with dangerous gun-powder. Only a spark is necessary to start the conflagration. The Concert of Europe and the Hague Court of Arbitration were established after the Napoleonic wars, for the submission of all grievances to an international tribunal for amicable settlement. But by an irony of fate, the two nations which had been loudest in advocating the cause of

arbitration were the first to scatter all sense of justice and fair-play to the winds when their selfish national interests goaded them to unsheath their swords. For a long time the idea prevailed that wars were the outcome of the greed and avarice of selfish monarchs. Democracy became the panacea for the evils of war. But during the Great War, while the Chief Executive of a state like America hesitated to rush into the battle-field, the masses, the 'demos', goaded him to plunge into the terrible Armageddon. Thus it has been practically demonstrated that Peace sought to be attained through political adjustment is as unstable as a huge colossus stuffed with clouts.

Then it has been suggested that an intelligent re-shuffling of the economic interests of different countries would put an end to war. If all the countries of the world are linked with one another by commercial ties, no nation will dare disturb the peace of the world for fear of losing its commercial stakes and vested interests. The last war, which was largely the result of commercial competition, has dashed to pieces any hope from that quarter. It was found out that the economic blockade of an enemy country is as powerful a weapon to decide the outcome of a war, as the tank or poison gas.

Another fond hope was that the growth of science, resulting in the increase of armaments and weapons of destruction, would put an end to the pugnacious spirit of man because of the colossal devastation inevitable in a scientific warfare. But the example of the World War which was carried on with the highest scientific skill and most perfect

engines of destruction, does not inspire us with this hope any longer.

We can well imagine the derisive smile on the lips of the theologian. He says, with a chuckle, that all wars are the outcome of the devilish instinct of man. Materialism breeds hatred which results in war. To dream of peace without religion is like driving a car with releasing the emergency brake. Only a religion proclaiming the ideal of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man can bring peace on earth and good-will to all. But here again, as in other fields of human activity, the records of history are not genuinely hopeful. More blood was shed in Europe during the middle ages in the name of religion than from secular considerations. In Asia and Africa the Bible has been followed by the battalion. Mercantile fleets and battle ships have followed in the wake of the Cross. The Mussalmans preached their religion with Quoran in one hand and the sword in the other. Even to the present day, theological religion has remained a stumbling block in the way of peace and unity. Again the bond of brotherhood under our common heavenly Father has proved a fragile bond. It gives way under the stress of bigotry and fanaticism.

At the present time there is a longing for peace. It is to a great extent due to the horrible carnage witnessed during the last war. It is also a reaction to the dislocation of trade and business as well as to the low moral standards caused by the war. All eyes are rivetted on the success or failure of the League of Nations and the Arms parleys to wield the olive branch of peace. But as long as the fundamental causes of war are not removed, the hope of

peace will continue to recede from us like the proverbial Cup of Tantalus.

When the necessity arises Nature improvises war to eliminate the flotsam and jetsam of humanity. Even if its biological importance is outlived, it will remain a psychological necessity. The instincts of tiger, lion and serpent that dwell in the human heart must assert themselves at convenient moments, with venomous claws and fangs. Under the exigency of circumstances all solemn treaties are reduced to mere scraps of paper.

The nations which were loudest in their condemnation of the Russo-Japanese tension and pleaded for peace, secretly sold war materials to the belligerents, their purpose being too obvious to be stated.

The two deep-rooted psychological causes of war are fear and greed. Man develops his bellicose instinct because he is afraid of a rival. This is true of the nation as well. To-day the different nations of the world, particularly in Europe and America, are armed to the teeth because they do not desire to be caught unawares by their powerful neighbor. This fear and distrust of one another has turned the blue sky, fair earth and azure ocean into fiery lists. The tears of widows, the cry of orphans, the groans of the starving, the neighing of horses, the wild hurrah of men and the booming of cannon are the results of this fear of nations that were elbowing out each other in their struggle for self-advancement. Their slogan was, "Let every body take care of himself, and the devil take the hindmost."

Again, the deeper psychological cause of this fear is the perception of duality in existence. Vedanta, the philosophy

of the Hindus, says that when men see duality then one is afraid of the other. Is this duality an appearance or a reality? Is there really a fundamental difference between various entities of the world? Are we essentially different from one another, and related by a pre-established harmony? Modern science tells us that this difference is superficial. There is only one substance which assumes this appearance of multiplicity. Science designates it as matter, whose real nature it has not yet been able to determine. A class of philosophers designates it as mind or idea. There is only one idea which has concretised itself as the sun, the moon, the man, the earth, the tree, the ocean, etc. The Hindus go one step further and say that there is only one Spirit, unborn, eternal, free from disease, change or death. Seen through the gross external senses this Spirit appears as matter. Again perceived through the mind this Spirit is cognized as idea. But when a man transcends the limitations of the senses and the mind, then he perceives that he is the eternal Spirit whom weapon cannot cleave, fire cannot burn, water cannot moisten and wind cannot dry. Duality does not exist except in imagination. Duality is perceived on account of the ignorance of our real nature. When a man knows his real nature as the eternal and infinite Spirit, he realizes the unity of existence. He knows that by hating others he only hates himself, and by killing others he only kills himself. A man who realizes himself as walking through all feet, grasping through all hands, seeing through all eyes, eating through all mouths and thinking through all minds, cannot possibly kill or

hate others. This realization of the unity of existence can alone make a man strong and fearless. Strength attained through physical means, having duality as its background, is weakness in disguise. Behind the exhibition of strength of the military nations of to-day there is the weakness of the coward. Europe shows to-day the flush of a wasting fever. So long as this imaginary distinction remains between the East and the West, the white and the colored, the Christian and the heathen, so long plunder and destruction will continue and the reign of peace will remain a dream.

Greed is another cause of war. If a man thinks that all his happiness consists in his enjoyment of material prosperity, he cannot but cast an eye of longing upon the wealth of others. A man is greedy because he has forgotten his real nature. Does a man live on the mere sense-plane? The ego and the non-ego whose contact makes possible all relative experience are changeable and negatable. They do not constitute the real nature of man. Even through all these changes, a sense of reality persists. Childhood changes into youth. The youth passes into old age. But through all these experiences there persists the indubitable consciousness, "I am". Buddha and Christ are mere waves in the ocean of consciousness, "I am". This consciousness is the Divine heritage of man. Modern psychology is becoming dimly aware of this state and designates it as the realm of 'unconsciousness' about which it does not know anything. A man is like a huge ice-berg, nine-tenths of which is submerged under water and therefore unseen. Only one-tenth is seen on the surface, which constitutes the visible

form. Greed, avarice and passion only belong to the surface. But he who enters into the innermost recess of his Soul, discovers the truth that he is by nature ever-pure, ever-blessed and ever-divine. He is not a slave of matter, which is impermanent and illusory. He is not dependent upon the extraneous circumstances which are created by him during his state of ignorance. The so-called external objects which create greed and stimulate passion are merely superficial tinsels. The King of Kings, a man, cannot, except through delusion, entangle himself in the meshes of unreality. The Upanishad says that before the glory of man's real nature, the sun cannot shine, the moon, the bright stars and the lightning in the black heavens, pale into darkness. Forgetting his real nature, man is smitten with greed — and finds himself hopelessly dependent upon matter, devoting all his energy to bring grist to the mill of his material prosperity. Oblivious of his real nature, he rushes out to plunder the wealth of 'Ormuz' and 'Ind' and tries to guard it with all the strength of his muscle and steel. Soon he realizes that he has been pursuing a will-o-the-wisp. As long as this greed, founded on the perception of duality, exists and goads him to action, war and its consequent horrors will be inevitable. Let the peace-makers of Europe and America beware of this fact.

All the efforts of the human mind to establish peace on earth through the means discussed above have, through their failures, taught us a great lesson. We have learnt that no lasting effect can be achieved without a change of heart. *Camouflage* can never give enduring results. A festering sore cannot be long hidden by a leaf of gold. W

have further learnt that expediency, political or otherwise, is a master juggler who holds in his hands a magic Kaleidoscope and takes malicious delight in making and breaking sworn alliances and combinations. Any effort at peace keeping intact the dual background with its inescapable consequences of fear and greed, must end in failure.

We stated at the beginning that no permanent universal peace is possible in a relative world. But the more men consciously strive to realize the Unity of existence and the divinity of the soul, the more possibility there is of lessening the vigor of hatred and strife, and of adorning the fair bosom of the earth with peace and good will.

* * * * *

A TALK

By the Editor

There lived a king in ancient India, with vast dominions. He was, however, driven out of his kingdom, and became a Sannyasin. Thus deprived of his rightful kingdom, he wandered all over the country, and after wandering for some years, he came across a saint and became his disciple.

One evening he asked the saint why he still felt for his people, although they had driven him from his kingdom. The saint replied "This is illusion, Maya, nescience. You still think they are your own. If you had knowledge through wisdom, you would have the same kindly feeling toward the whole universe. This is not love. Love does not limit." Then the king asked for the means of getting rid of this nescience, and the saint said, "The birds in the sky could starve, but they would feed their young. This is due to nescience, for they are under the control of nature."

When a physician cures a patient, he thinks that he cures by his knowledge. The scientist thinks in the same way, when he discovers something. This is egoism. They do not know that their knowledge is but a part of infinite wisdom. It is ignorance that makes us take something for that which it is not — misery for happiness, non-self for self. The universe is not that which it seems to be. Egoism makes us identify ourselves with things of the world. "I am this, that, son, mother, prince, etc." These are illusions.

Ignorance, egoism, greed, hatred and fear are the five forms in which Maya manifests itself. We are slaves and must break this bondage. We are forced by the Self within to shake off this Maya. We must be free from this world of ignorance and bondage and it exists so long as we live this side of time, space and causation.

The Vedantist explains Maya in this way: this universe has two forms, phenomenal and real. Maya is real in the sense of the phenomenal. It is not permanent. Then there is the other, the really real world, Brahman. The true Vedantist will not say this world does not exist. This universe may be an illusion, but it is based on something permanent, everlasting — the Absolute. Strictly speaking it is all the same — all Life.

To the Vedantist everything is Brahman. Just as in a dream the visions are real but as soon as we wake up we know it was a dream. This universe is a dream of that sort, but this is a longer dream, a cosmic dream. When we awaken we know the true nature of ourselves. Then

this cosmic ignorance will not have any influence on us. By power of thought the knowledge of real Self comes. By constant thought that nothing in the world belongs to me, neither its adversity nor its prosperity we must dispel this darkness — ignorance.

Once a son of a king was kidnapped by the chief of a wild tribe. He lived in a forest, and when he grew up, some men of the king heard of him, and approached him. The child said "I belong to these people, I am not a prince." By constantly telling the boy "You are a prince" the king's men awakened in him the sense of his true position. We are children of God, immortal, but we think we are under the control of nature. By constant meditation we will realize our real self.

We should be constantly vigilant and never lose sight of our ideal. The goal is the freedom from bondage of nature. Wilful negligence for one moment may delay our reaching the goal. This world is not our home. Vedanta states facts. This world has no eternal existence — our home is in ourselves. This knowledge, this wisdom can save us from illusion. By power of wisdom destroy illusion. Fire cannot burn us, wind cannot dry us. This Maya is Prakriti. Your soul is God within the meshes of Prakriti. Salvation is the separation of Purusha, the Soul, from Prakriti. Maya is in two forms — good and evil, and we must go beyond both, for Brahman is neither good nor evil, but Knowledge Absolute.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Question: What are your reasons for believing that the doctrine of Reincarnation is better than the doctrine of Resurrection?

Answer: (1) The doctrine of Reincarnation explains the various conditions of life more satisfactorily than the doctrine of Resurrection. If we assume that we come here for only one incarnation or term of life, and that we are created by a just, benevolent, wise and omnipotent God, we cannot account for the evils of life such as disease, poverty and misery. On this assumption we naturally expect health, prosperity, happiness, etc. for all. According to the doctrine of Reincarnation there is the same amount of good and evil apportioned to each individual, which he experiences through various incarnations. Thus the doctrine of Reincarnation vindicates the justice of God and also satisfies our own sense of justice. It furnishes the individual with necessary time to unfold himself and finally to reach the supreme goal or God.

(2) The doctrine of Reincarnation is a hypothesis rather than a dogma. Those who believe in it always have an open mind to receive another theory which can explain the aforesaid conditions of life more rationally and satisfactorily. It is a statement of facts proved so far by experience and reason.

(3) The doctrine of Reincarnation does not countenance any belief in substitution or vicarious atonement. It teaches man that he must earn his salvation by his character — by his good deeds, good thoughts and good words or in other words, he is his own savior.

(4) Those who believe in the doctrine of Reincarnation cremate their dead and do not bury them in the hope of their rising from the grave, which is absurd and superstitious. The buried dead bodies not only do not rise from the grave but in a few weeks or months or years, they rot and are decomposed, polluting air, earth and water. Furthermore, they think that those vast areas of land which are used for burying the dead can be cultivated to grow such useful crops as potatoes, wheat, corn, apples, grapes, oranges etc. for the support of human life.

These are the reasons which establish the superiority of the doctrine of Reincarnation to the doctrine of Resurrection.

Question: What is the meaning of Maya?

Answer: Maya means that which is not real but appears as real. The best illustration of Maya is the mirage. Travelers are often deluded by the mirage. They try to reach it but never succeed. It has only a false appearance. Similarly we are constantly under the illusion of Maya. Only those who know its true nature cease pursuing it. By knowing Maya we can be free from the illusion of Maya. It is a compound of two words *mā + yā* which literally mean "which is not."

ANNOUNCEMENT

The season's work of the Vedanta Society opens in October.

Sermons will be delivered on the following subjects by Swami Nikrilananda.

Sunday, Oct. 2nd. "Essentials and Non-essentials of Religion."

Sunday, Oct. 9th. "Nature of the Soul and Its Goal."

Sunday, Oct. 16th. "What is Yoga?"

Sunday, Oct. 23rd. "Old and New concepts of God."

Sunday, Oct. 30th. "Spiritual Background of Ethics."

These Sunday lectures are free and open to the public. All are welcome.

Tuesday and Friday Class lectures also will commence in October.

Our subscribers and friends will be glad to know that Swami Bodhananda completes his twentieth year of ministry this month. Before assuming the charge of the Vedanta Society of New York in 1912 he was leader of the Vedanta Society of Pittsburgh, Pa. for six years. Thus he has been preaching the Gospel of the Vedanta in the United States for the last twenty-six years. Swami Bodhananda is a direct disciple of Swami Vivekananda, the founder of the Vedanta Society of New York, and an accredited member of the Ramakrishna Order in India.

VEDANTA DARPANA

OR

MIRROR OF VEDANTA

—oOo—

"Om Bhuh, Bhuvah, Swah:
We meditate upon that Adorable, Light
of the Deva who is their Creator.
May He lead our thoughts to Him!"

Gavatri—the most Sacred
Hymn of the Vedas..

Vol. II

NOVEMBER, 1932

No. 11

SELECTIONS FROM THE BHAGAVAD GITA

With Explanation

CHAPTER II.

In the following verses of the second chapter, Sri Krishna describes the Immortality of the soul:

"It never was when I was not; nor you and all these rulers of men; and surely it is not that all of us shall cease to exist hereafter." . . . 12.

This idea of the Immortality of the soul differs from all other ideas in that here we find no special Immortality. The Lord Himself disclaims it and proclaims in very plain and unmistakable terms that Immortality is not the special gift or right of any particular Prophet or Savior, but it is the birthright of all individuals. They all existed in the past and shall exist in the future just as truly and really as they do exist now.

"Just as in this body the embodied soul has its childhood, youth and old age, even so does it obtain another body. The wise man is never deluded in regard to this matter." . . . 13.

Birth and death are two extreme incidents of life. They are as unimportant as such changes as childhood, youth, etc., are. The knower of the truth treats them all alike.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA THE PARABLE OF THE AGRICULTURIST

A certain person said to Sri Ramakrishna, "Sir, I have gone through a long course of devotional exercises, but everything is as dark as before. They are of no use to persons of my kind." Sri Ramakrishna gave him a slight smile and said, "Look here; the hereditary agriculturist does not leave off tilling the soil though it may not rain for twelve consecutive years; while those who do not strictly belong to that class but take to agriculture in the hope of making large profits, are discouraged by one season of drought. The true believer does not give up repeating His holy name and proclaiming His glory, if even with his life-long devotion he fails to see God."

THE IDEAL OF PURITY

By the Editor

All prophets, saviors and teachers of humanity, no matter in what language they have delivered their message, are unanimous in one respect as the *sine qua non* of spiritual realization. It is the purity of heart. "Blessed are the pure in heart; for, they shall see God." Jesus Christ declared this as one of his chief commandments. Purity in word, thought and deed is the condition precedent, according to the Vedas, to the illumination of the soul. The Upanishad says that Atman can be realized by self-control, truthfulness and absolute continence. In the pure heart of the seeker is reflected the glory of Truth, as in clear water one catches one's own reflection.

What is purity? Organised religions give different definitions of purity. They say that loyalty to the teachings

of their respective church, or scripture constitutes purity. A man can, with impunity, disregard the universal truth provided he does not betray his loyalty to his own faith. The follower of a particular creed can maintain the purity of motive even by wounding the feelings of others if he by that act promotes the welfare of his own church. The friend maintains that the purity of friendship depends upon the single-minded devotion of the friend. Similarly the wife demands that the purity of the conjugal relationship is based upon the loyalty of the husband to her alone. This is an explanation from the objective standpoint. Any objective explanation cannot have universal bearing. Therefore the human relationship, in the name of purity, creates dissensions and heart-burnings.

An Upanishadic verse may be thus translated: "The self-willed creator created our senses with outgoing propensities. Therefore we look outside for truth and not within. But *Dhira*, the discriminative student, in order to attain to immortality, closed his sense-organs to the external objects and realized the innermost Self within his own soul." This is the basis of purity as well as of love, sacrifice, understanding and other cardinal spiritual virtues. This definition suggests that purity is the turning of our mind from the multiplicity of external objects to the Eternal Truth for ever carved on the tablet of our soul. That which helps us to realize the unity of existence is pure. That which divides one experience from another is impure. A pure child does not see the distinction between a saint and a sinner. He does not discriminate between a friend and a foe. To his simple and unsuspecting nature every-

thing is pure and loveable. This purity of the child, undoubtedly, is due to his ignorance and lack of discrimination. The saint also sees purity everywhere. But this is due to his rational understanding of the world. He sees God or his Self in all beings. That God is ever-pure, ever-resplendent and ever-free from all blemishes. Therefore he does not feel any repulsion for anybody. The sacred river Jumna and the impure water of the gutter flowing into the Ganges become, alike, one with the water of the Ganges. Iron shaped into the hunter's arrow and another piece of the same metal used in the temple service equally become gold when they touch the philosopher's stone. The saint and the sinner become indistinguishable when they touch the feet of God. The drab and grey of our life become equally illumined when touched by the sunset glow of divine realization. The saint puts the collyrium of divine love to his eye and sees everywhere purity, the manifestation of God. The real test of purity lies in our viewing with sameness of feeling all the phenomena of the universe. So long as a man discriminates between the water of the Ganges and the muddy water of the ditch, heaven and hell, the pure and the impure, the bone pieces and the sacred rosary, he has not attained to the ideal of purity.

In this relative world we have various empirical standards of purity. Society and religion prescribe their respective standards of purity. And these standards have their respective place and utility. They enable us to gradually purify our heart so that we may ultimately establish ourselves in the Ideal of purity which is viewing everything with sameness as the manifestation of God. The merit and efficacy of these standards can be judged by their ability

to make us recognise the differences we see around us. But a standard, whatever may be its empirical value, cannot take us to the highest objective of life, if it persists in maintaining the duality of existence.

Purity is God. God is love. And love is the absence of jealousy or bitterness. The relation that is pure and free from turpitude is above mean jealousy or bitterness. One often speaks of the pure relation between the mother and the child, friend and friend, the husband and the wife. This relation is pure if it reflects in the heart of the lover the image of truth. Purity is not a negative virtue. A child cannot have pure love from his mother by demanding her to love him alone with all her heart, soul and mind. The mother who loves all children as her own child is alone established in purity. Purity broadens the outlook whereas impurity narrows it down. Purity encourages infinite freedom whereas impurity cribs and cramps. The watchword of purity is liberty in all things whereas impurity loves to impose a close surveillance.

It is said in the Upanishad that the wife loves the husband not for the sake of the husband but for the sake of the Self in the husband. The wife is loved by the husband not for the sake of the wife but for the Self manifesting through the wife. Similarly we love our parents, wealth, possession, country and the world not for their sakes, but for the sake of Truth permeating in and through them. As we have said before, purity unites and impurity divides and multiplies.

The relative definitions of purity which govern our every day life hold good in so far as they help us to get the

vision of the Infinite and the Absolute. Love for parents, husband, wife, children, temple, creed or book is pure if it takes away from the mind the limitations of the senses and opens before it the vista of the infinite glory of God. The Supreme Truth is that love resides in our heart. The pure soul manifests it outside, sees his beloved everywhere, and worships him with the same love. The Love, the Lover and the Beloved are One.

ORIGIN AND IMPORT OF CASTE

By Swami Bodhananda

Four powers predominate in the life of every well-regulated society and civilization: religion, politics, capital and labor. The upholder of religion is called the priest; of politics, the warrior or statesman; of capital, the merchant; and of labor, the servant. These four elements in more or less stratified form constitute what is commonly called caste.

According to the prevalence in greater or less degree of the three natural qualities, *sattva* (goodness), *rajas* (passion) and *tamas* (inertia) in man, the four castes are present at all times and everywhere in all civilized societies. History bears testimony to this fact. Among the ancient Greeks there were two social strata, aristocracy and democracy; among the Romans, Patricians and Plebeians, and so with all races modern as well as ancient. Their number and supremacy vary at different times, in different countries according to environmental conditions.

The term caste requires a little explanation. It is a Portuguese word and was applied, from about the middle of

the Sixteenth Century, by rough Portuguese sailors, to certain divisions of Indian (Hindu) Society which had struck their fancy. It had before been used as denoting breed or stock, originally in the sense of a pure and unmixed breed. The word that the Hindus use for it is Varna, meaning color. The members of the four divisions into which Hindu Society was organized, had four distinct complexions: white, yellow, brown and dark.

In India caste has a twofold significance, social and racial. As a social institution it is based on the economic principle of the division of labor; the strata are guilds or unions arranged according to the varying culture and capacity of the people. Each has its special function or occupation, and to preserve the integrity of these divisions, they are exclusive of each other as distinct classes and communities, but never hostile to each other's ideals. They are all bound together by the common interest of the well-being and advancement of the society. No man was ever debarred from religion because of his low profession, all people having equal rights to religion. The only class privileges that existed were in certain unavoidable social matters.

The racial significance of caste originated from the early days when the Aryans migrated to India from the North, fought against, conquered and subdued those who were already in possession of that country. These Aryans were obviously a powerful and intellectual people, and as soon as they became pre-eminent in position in their new home, they organized themselves into a regulative polity. Thus we have in India the Aryan settlers on one side, and the native inhabitants on the other. These Aryans became

divided into three strata, namely (1) the priestly aristocracy or Brahmins; (2) the fighting or ruling aristocracy or Kshatriyas; (3) the commercial aristocracy or Vaishyas. To the very last these three great divisions; Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas shared certain privileges and duties in common. The native inhabitants, who became submissive to their conquerors, the Aryans, formed the Plebeian stratum called Sudras (servants); while the races of indigenous origin who remained hostile to the end, were classed as altogether outside the pale of political society. The three aristocratic classes were called Dwija (twice-born) and were not only allowed but obliged to be educated in Vedic literature, and to pass through the four Ashramas or stages of life. While the division into Aryans and Non-Aryans (Sudras) was due to descent (i.e. racial), that division in Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas seems originally due to occupation only (i.e. social).

Now let us look at the position of the three sections of aristocracy as well as the plebeian section, in ancient India, and see the functions assigned to them. The Brahman caste was held responsible for the maintenance of learning and religion, and for teaching whatever was valuable as an element of culture or discipline to all the three originally Aryan castes. The Kshatriya was responsible for the maintenance of peace and order in society, and for the achievement of all such progress as depended upon war and the due exercise of political authority. It is clear that the work for which the priestly caste was made responsible, and also that of the warrior, were intended to serve the common good of the community. There were restrictions placed

upon the life of both these castes with the object of preventing them from prostituting their power and position for class advantage or self-aggrandisement.

The Brahman was religiously enjoined to be always contented and to lead the life of poverty and purity in preference to the life of luxury and plenty. The Kshatriya had to discard ease and indolence, to be ever active and generous, so that all his wealth and power and heroic achievement went to serve the good of the community over which he had become guardian by birthright. These responsibilities were certainly not intended to make the Brahman or the Kshatriya work for selfish ends. All commercial, agricultural and pastoral duties were entrusted to the Vaishya. He traveled from country to country to buy and sell industrial and agricultural products, and a considerable part of his income went to the general improvement of his country and people. The Sudra was the common servant of the three higher castes.

The original caste was a qualitative system, though it may have, in certain places, acquired an hereditary characteristic later. Krishna, one of the greatest religious teachers in India, says that the fourfold caste is eternal and exists among all men according to the distribution and combination of energies and qualities. It can be amply demonstrated that men's duties are determined for them by the potentialities and qualities of their own nature. Accordingly, it is the duty of the man, in whose nature the Sattva-guna (quality of goodness or rhythm i.e., serenity and control) prevails, to live the spiritual life; in whose nature the Raja-guna (quality of activity or passion) or

Tama-guna (quality of darkness or inertia) prevails to live the rajas (active) or tamas (idle) form of life, as the case may be. It is easy enough then to understand that the source of the Brahmana's nature is the quality of spiritual goodness; the source of the Kshatriya's nature is the mixed quality of goodness and activity; the source of the Vaishya's nature is that of activity and darkness or dullness; the Sudra's nature is the quality of unmixed darkness.

Nature is the tendency in living beings acquired by them in the past births and manifesting itself in the present birth in being ready to yield effects; and this nature is the source of gunas (qualities). The duties (actions) of the four castes are divided according to these births. The duties requiring tranquility, self-control, self-restraint, patience, straight-forwardness, knowledge, wisdom and faith are Brahmanical in nature. Those born with the fitness to develop and manifest these characteristics in a marked degree are entitled to live the Brahmanical life. Similarly, heroism, valor, courage, skillfulness, cleverness, firmness in battle and masterfulness are declared to be the natural virtues which fit one for living the life of the Kshatriya. Agriculture, cattle raising and commerce constitute the life-work of the Vaishya, and physical labors and personal services form the function in life of those fitted to be Sudras. The philosopher, the soldier, the wealth-producer and the servant laborer are thus the typical representatives of the different functions which have to be performed to maintain the welfare of society. The four sets of qualities as classified by implication or direct expression in the Gita can enable its owner to live only a particular kind of life well. Therefore, the duty which is determined for one by

one's own nature, is one's own duty; while that other duty, which is determined for another by his different nature, is another's duty.

In the last chapter of the Gita it has been clearly declared by Krishna that the man who is devoted to his own duties attains perfection sooner, even if these are ill-performed, than another's duties well-performed, and that no man can ever come to harm by doing the work determined for him by his own nature. Thus we see the original caste system was founded on the principle of social economy and shaped according to the nature-born qualities and capacities of men, and all the great Hindu teachers took cognizance of caste by quality and action only. But in the course of time this principle of caste fell into disuse, as every good custom does, and hereditary caste came into existence.

It is quite evident, that some among these castes did violate the obligations of these wisely planned rules of life and became unduly selfish and degenerate, which gave rise to hereditary caste. It has been declared in all the Hindu scriptures that a Brahman by neglecting his appointed duties, degrades himself to the level of the Sudra, while a Sudra by performing his duties rightly, elevates himself to the rank of the Brahman. There are innumerable instances of this fact in the history of ancient India. Most of the religious teachers were of the non-Brahman castes. The son of a Brahman should not be recognized as a Brahman, according to the canons of Manu and Yagnyavalkya, unless he possesses the virtues necessary for Brahmanhood. The ideal Brahmanhood is that in which worldliness is altogether absent, and knowledge and wisdom abundantly

present. This has been the ideal of the Hindu races for all ages. A Brahman is not amenable to law nor is he governed by anybody. He is moral and good by nature. Why should he require any law for his guidance? Why should he be under any government? The police, the constabulary, the military are needed for the control of those who are weak and wicked. We read in the Mahabharata that the whole world was in the beginning peopled with Brahmans, and as they began to degenerate, they became divided into different castes; and that when the cycle turns around they will go back to the Brahmanical origin, to raise humanity slowly and gently towards the realization of that great ideal of the spiritual man who is calm, steady, worshipful, pure and meditative.

As the basic principle of Hindu caste is culture, in India a poor man of a higher caste has a loftier social position than a king in other countries. He is honored and worshipped though he lives in a hut and begs his bread from door to door. He is proud of his blood and of his learning. In the western countries caste means wealth. The wealthier the man, the higher is his honor and social position. In India the greatest princes feel proud to trace their descent to some ancient Rishi—sage, dressed in simple clothes, living in a forest, eating roots and fruits, studying the Vedas and practicing yoga; while in the West the cardinals, the bishops and the popes struggle hard to prove the nobility of their ancestors by tracing their descent to a robber-baron or pirate-king. Which caste is the better and more honorable? Caste by culture or by wealth?

It is the composite nature of the stratified social life

that made the unrestrained admixture of blood between the various castes unwholesome and undesirable, and led to the laying down of restrictions on intermarriage in the interest of the community in general. Whether it is right or wrong to impose such restrictions is a point about which modern investigations, bearing on the power of heredity in determining the character of individuals, have no doubt. These investigations establish the potency of heredity in even minor details in the character of individuals. The Western Evolutionists have ascertained that both saintliness and criminality run in the blood which men inherit from their parents and progenitors. If that be so, surely we ought to take particular care to see that there is no such admixture of blood in communities as is not conducive to the growth of purity, otherwise the already harvested fruit of moral and self-discipline will slowly but surely decay, and there will be no compensation of any kind for this loss of not easily attained purity, strength and goodness. If such truly is the value of heredity in determining character, and if we further know that the practical preservation of this helpful power of heredity is shared by the men and women of a civilized society, this is one of the most potent arguments in favor of hereditary caste and non-intermarriage among highly different races and classes.

Whether the free admixture of blood between individuals belonging to different communities, living at different levels of civilization, with different ideals, aims and aspirations, is productive of any good in the cause of general human progress, has been discussed by Dr. Bryce in his lectures and the conclusion to which he comes cannot but be in-

teresting to us. He is of the opinion that such admixture in the long run, tends to diminish the wealth of character and potency for civilization which human communities possess. Although the weaker community may gain a little in quality and vigor, the stronger community loses a great deal more by its correlated admixture with the weaker one. This is clearly not desirable in the interest of the progress of humanity as a whole. Herbert Spencer is also known to have been of the opinion that even such races as occupy similar levels of culture and civilization, because of their racial difference, will suffer loss of power through unregulated intercrossing, owing to its tendency to disturb the stability of the physiological equilibrium of all the inherited racial and individual moral endowments.

Nor do the Hindus advocate marriage by choice. The elderly members of families and societies suggest and decide whom to marry and whom not. As the progress and regression of society depend so largely upon the nature of the offspring of every marriage, the society has a right to advise whom we should marry. • It may be safely asserted that three-fourths of the criminality, corruption and domestic unhappiness of the countries where marriage by choice prevails, is due to injudicious and indiscriminate selection.

If in the world today, any universally prevailing authority promulgates a law doing away with all social and racial barriers in matters of marriage, and declares that the men of all races and nationalities at any level of culture and civilization are at perfect liberty to marry any woman of these races and communities at any level of civilization and culture, and that such mixed unions seem desirable and

legitimate, then in the course of a few generations the whole human civilization will perish from the face of the earth.

Thus we see that the Hindu caste system in its true plans and purposes is not injurious at all, as many people imagine. Caste exists among these also, as the very origin of caste is the nature born quality and capability of man only in the case of these objectors their caste is cruder and coarser than that of the Hindu teachers, who were cultured and saw the light of civilization centuries before Moses and Jesus. Caste is not an evil, but our failure to understand its beneficial purpose and act in accordance with its wisely laid out rules and ideals, is an unmitigated sin.

As the different members of the body have their different functions to perform in the whole physical organism, even so the different castes constitute the different parts or members of the whole social organism, of which "the Brahman is the head; the Kshatriya, the arms; the Vaishya, the loins, and the Sudra, the feet."

ANNOUNCEMENTS

(1)

The first number of the third volume of Vedanta Darpaṇa will be issued in the first week of January, 1933. We are glad to announce that the second year has been as successful as the first, and we hope that through the support and sympathy of our friends and subscribers the third year will be more successful than the last two.

The prospective as well as the present subscribers are requested to send their subscriptions for the third volume

at their earliest convenience. This will facilitate the registration of their names and addresses in due time. If the subscriber wishes to remit his subscription later, he will do us a great favour if he mentions the time when he can do so. We shall note his request and send a reminder before that.

(2)

Swami Bodhananda came to the United States in the summer of 1906. He was acting minister of the Vedanta Society of New York until the following winter. In February 1907, he went to Pittsburgh, Pa., and had the charge of the Vedanta Centre for six years. Since 1912 he has been leader of the Vedanta Society of New York. The present home of the Vedanta Society is a gift from a friend and pupil of Swami Bodhananda. After thus working in this country for the past twenty-six years, he has lately decided to retire from all active service. Swami Nikhilananda, a member of the Order of Sri Ramakrishna in India, is his successor now. He has the charge of the work of the Vedanta Society and will conduct all Sunday services and week day classes.

Every Sunday at 11 A. M. Swami Nikhilananda delivers a sermon, and every Tuesday and every Friday evening at 8 P. M. he holds classes on the Bhagavad Gita and the Upanishads respectively. The Sunday services and the Tuesday evening classes are open to the public. The Friday evening class is for the members of the Vedanta Society.

Please communicate with the Secretary for all information regarding the Vedanta Society. Swami Nikhilananda gives interviews to members and visitors by appointment.

VEDANTA DĀRPAṆA

OR

MIRROR OF VEDANTA

—oOo—

"Om Bhuh, Bhuvah, Swah:

*We meditate upon that Adorable Light
of the Deva who is their Creator.*

May He lead our thoughts to Him!"

*Gayatri—the most Sacred
Hymn of the Vedas.*

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SELECTIONS FROM THE BHAGAVAD GITA

With Explanation

CHAPTER II

Sri Krishna continues his discourse upon the Immortality of the Soul through verses 14-30. He brings it to a close with an appeal to Arjuna that in the body of all beings is the embodied Soul ever indestructible and he should not, therefore, mourn in relation to all beings.

In these verses he has discussed that most important subject from various points of view. For instance, in verse 16, he describes the attitude of the idealist. He reiterates the famous distinction between the existent and the non-existent: "That which is not has no existence and that which is has no non-existence."

Again in verse 22 he presents the theory of the Reincarnationist. "Just as a man, having cast off worn out clothes, takes others that are new, so does the body-owning Soul give up worn out bodies and get into others that are new."

He argues from the viewpoint of the materialist in verse 26. "And if you think that this Soul is, on the other hand, constantly born and constantly dies, even then it is not proper for you to sorrow in regard to it."

The Buddhistic doctrine of momentary existence (Ksha-

nika-Vignana) is reviewed in the 25th verse. "All beings in this world are characterized by an unknown beginning. They have a known middle and surely an unknown end. What is the meaning of sorrowing in relation to them?"

By this philosophical argument he finally establishes the spiritual Immortality of the Soul.

* * * *

SRI RAMAKRISHNA

THE PARABLE OF THE WOODCUTTER

A woodcutter led a very miserable life by selling firewood which he brought from a forest. One day as he was carrying home a load of thin firewood, he was accosted by a stranger who advised him to go ahead. The next day he followed this advice and went further into the forest and had his reward, for he met with an abundance of large trees in that part of the forest. He cut down as many logs as his strength permitted and by selling them made a much larger profit than he had ever made before. The next day he thought to himself, "I have been advised to go ahead; why not go further ahead today?" He did as he thought and that day reached a part of the forest which was full of sandalwood trees. He took away with him as many sandal logs as he could carry and by selling them in the market made a large profit. The next day he again remembered the stranger's advice and resolved to make a further advance. That day he came upon a copper mine. But this did not check his further advance; day after day as he advanced further and further he got at silver mines, gold mines and diamond mines and at last grew enormously rich.

Such is the case also with the path of spirituality. One

should constantly go ahead and must not think that one has achieved anything as soon as one has seen a few visions or the Light Divine, or acquired some psychic powers.

* * *

THE FOUR VITAL QUESTIONS OF LIFE

By the Editor

The following story from the Mahabharata, the great epic of the Hindus, describes the four vital questions of life and also gives replies to them

Once upon a time King Yudhishthira and his four brothers, while living in exile in a forest, felt thirsty. Nakula, one of the younger brothers, was sent for water. Climbing a tall tree, he saw a lake full to the brim with crystal water and adorned with lotuses and lilies. He went to the lake and was about to touch the water when he heard a Yaksha, a Spirit, speaking to him, "Dear friend! I am the owner of this lake. I will ask you four questions. If you dare touch the water before replying to them, you shall meet with instantaneous death." Nakula was extremely thirsty. Disdaining the words of the Yaksha, he touched the water and at once dropped dead. Sahadeva, the youngest brother, was sent in search of Nakula. He came to the lake and found his dead brother lying by the side of it. The Yaksha warned Sahadeva not to touch the water before replying to his questions. But he also disregarded the warning and fell dead. The two other brothers of Yudhishthira, viz. Arjuna and Bhima, met with the same fate. At last the wise king Yudhishthira, celebrated for his piety, devotion to truth and righteousness, came to the lake himself. The Yaksha challenged him. The King requested the Spirit to

put forth the questions. The Yaksha asked, "Who is the happiest man in the world?"

Yudhisthira: He who takes one simple meal in the course of the day but is free from debt and does not beg, is the happiest man in the world.

The Yaksha: Good. What is the most wonderful thing in the world?

Yudhisthira: Every day we find hundreds of people dying before our own eyes; but we think that our turn shall never come. This is the most wonderful thing in the world.

The Yaksha: Good. What is the way?

Yudhisthira: The Scriptures are not unanimous in their opinions. The codes of conduct are different in different countries. The opinions of the thoughtful persons are also divided. The truth of religion is an eternal mystery. Therefore the safest way is to follow in the footsteps of a noble soul.

The Yaksha: Well done! Now the last question. What is the most startling news of the day?

Yudhisthira: This world of delusion is like a huge caldron. The Sun is the fire. Days and nights are the fuel. Months and seasons are the ladle. Time is the cook. Now the most startling news of the day is that Time is cooking all beings in this huge caldron of the world which is heated by the fire of the Sun, kept burning by the fuel of the day and night. The contents of the caldron are stirred now and then by the ladle of months and seasons.

The spirit was greatly pleased with the wisdom of Yudhisthira and said that he would be glad to restore to life any one of the dead brothers. He asked the King to make

his choice. Yudhishthira asked for the life of Nakula, his step-brother. The Spirit said that either Bhima or Arjuna, the two great heroes, would be of real help to him in future. The King said in reply, "True. But I have two mothers, Kunti and Madri. Kunti, my own mother, will be always happy to see me alive. I intend to make Madri equally happy by restoring to life one of her sons. I do not like to deviate from the path of righteousness. If I do not give up virtue, virtue also will not give me up." The Spirit was so pleased with the charity of the King that he revived all the brothers.

The objective of all human efforts and strivings is the attainment of happiness. Happiness is the dream of our sleep and the theme of our thought by day. Man living in the sense-plane thinks that material possessions alone can make him happy. He thinks that happiness can be obtained from external objects. Hence these indecent and ruthless endeavors to add to our material possessions. But does any external object make one happy? All truthful minds will answer this query³ in the negative. Sense-pleasures can give us a momentary thrill. But they do not bring peace to the mind. Why is there no peace in the world to-day? It is because of our ceaseless exploitation of all resources for increasing our creature comforts. Inordinate acquisitiveness, oppression of the weak and other kindred evils follow in the wake of this greed of human minds. The inevitable result is class-hatred. To-day a handful of persons enjoy the pleasure of eating cake while the vast majority of people do not get a crumb of bread. There is an unequal and uneven distribution of wealth. This is at the root of our present-day misery. Even in the United

States of America, the wealthiest country in the world, more than fifty per cent of the people eke out a miserable existence from day to day. They live from hand to mouth. The entire wealth of the nation is manipulated by a handful of persons. It is for this reason we find that behind our superficial merriment there is a heart-rending wail and the whole thing ends in a sob. But even the possession of wealth does not make its owner happy. He lives in constant fear of being robbed of his money. He is ever alert to devise means of safe-guarding his hoarded treasure. He does not enjoy sweet sleep without laudanum. Then where is his happiness? He may feel a thrill when he looks at his bank credit. But that does not bring peace to his mind.

The real happiness is a mental condition. It comes from the tapping of the fountain of joy that lies within the human heart. The more we enjoy external objects, the more our appetite increases for them. And we go away from inner felicity. The external pleasures arise from the contact of the sense-organs with the various objects. Since these objects are fleeting in nature, the happiness derived from them is also evanescent. The more we enjoy external pleasures through our sense-organs the more these are worn out. The inevitable result is imbecility. Nowadays one comes across many a young man or woman with wan face, heavy eyes and dissipated looks. No amount of external rouge can hide the anemic condition of the body. Succumbing to the cravings for ephemeral pleasures they do not enjoy the perennial feast of youth. The dog chews a dry bone. His tongue is bruised. The drops of blood fall to the ground. He licks up the blood with evident pleasure, thinking that he gets it from the dry bone. He

does not know that he is tasting his own blood. We also try to suck up juice from the dry bones of the world. But dry sand cannot yield a drop of water. We only impoverish our own vitality and when we realize it, it is perhaps too late. The wise King of ancient India gives the advice not to look for peace and happiness in the external objects. They should be reduced to a minimum. The more we shut our eyes to the outside world, the more the inner chamber of the Soul opens up. Therein lies happiness, real, permanent and abiding.

To the vast majority of men and women who look upon the body as their real Self, the very thought of death is painful and oppressive. They always feel a creeping sensation when reminded of death. A little introspection should convince everyone that the fact of death is more real than that of life. An old Roman proverb says, "Nothing is so sure as death and tax." The obituary columns in a newspaper always remind the readers of this inevitable and unavoidable fact of nature. That which is the result of the combination of certain Elements cannot be permanent. The combining parts will fall asunder when the cohesive power is removed and death will ensue. As the human body is a combination of blood, flesh, bones, nerves, sinews, etc., it cannot be permanent. Though everyone is well aware of this fact of death, yet he moves, lives and acts as if he were not going to die. The meticulous care for physical perfection, the human instinct for hoarding money, the desire for material enjoyment, etc., are actuated by a subtle and insidious belief in the immortality of the body. If we constantly remember death is hanging upon us all like the proverbial Sword of Damocles, ready to fall on our neck

at any moment, we shall perhaps become more charitable, more God-loving and more generous. Again this thought of the impermanence of our body can goad us to search after an abiding reality which is beyond life and death. It is true that material improvement of life is not possible with the thought of death constantly haunting our mind. But spiritual realization cannot be attained unless we are reminded of the evanescent character of the body. It is spiritual realization and not any material aggrandisement that gives us abiding solace, bliss and peace.

Every seeker after Truth, at the very outset of his search, is puzzled with a great perplexity. He at once feels that there are "so many gods, so many creeds, so many paths that wind and wind." The great Scriptures of the world, the Vedas, the Bible, the Quoran, are by no means unanimous in their conclusions. They are often at loggerheads regarding their views. Again, there is not one accepted code of human conduct. Different Societies prescribe different rules which, as regards their application and purpose, are poles asunder. The Hindus denounce widow remarriage and approve polygamy. The Christians uphold the opposite views; yet much can be said on both sides. In the Hindu Society one finds marriage without love, in the Western Society there is love without marriage. If the former is tragic, the latter, often, brings disgrace. Hindu Society has a system of castes. Western Society approves of a levelling doctrine by which it intends to give equal privilege to all. But if the social laws are meant to increase the virility of a society and conserve its strength, one cannot definitely say which system is better suited to the purpose. Similarly, in most matters, social laws differ. Again

if we go to thoughtful persons, the intellectuals and philosophers, with a problem, we, by no means, get a solution which is approved by them all. Regarding the nature of God, soul and the world, there are as many opinions as there are minds. This is also the case with the methods of realizing Truth. Naturally the students are perplexed. They try one after the other, or perhaps they develop an eclectic or syncretic philosophy of life, by combining various views. But that does not help them, in the least, to attain to the goal of their search. If I want to reach the roof of a house and find several stair-cases, an elevator and a rope-ladder leading to the roof, and if I try to go just a little way by each of these means and then give up the effort, I can never reach the roof. Then what is the way? King Yudhishthira expresses practical wisdom when he says that we should firmly follow in the foot-steps of a noble soul. All students of spirituality will do well to fix upon an ideal, such as a Buddha, a Christ, a Krishna, a Confucius, or a Moses and follow the ideal with the courage of a martyr and the zeal of an apostate. A little blindness to the ultimate ideal is necessary at the beginning to keep the mind from straying into alien paths. Whenever a student is faced with a problem he will do well to remember what Buddha or Christ did under similar circumstances. If he can follow the ideal with single-minded devotion, constancy of purpose and unwavering zeal, the goal will be within his reach in no time. The difficulty is in choosing an ideal. But even in this poor and dreary world a Christ or a Buddha has not yet been relegated to the limbo. Their lives furnish us with a beacon light to be followed in the

midst of this wilderness of the world; a real column of fire by night and a pillar of smoke by day.

The one unsatiable craving of our heart is to learn about some startling event. At our breakfast table we open the newspaper and our eyes quickly run over the double-column headlines. A home-run by Babe Ruth, the arrest of Al Capone, kidnapping of the Lindbergh baby, a speech by Roosevelt or Hoover sends a thrill all over our body. We are satisfied that we have gotten something in the morning and we can chew the cud all the day. In the absence of any such sensational event, the day seems dull. Human thought is paradoxical. We all profess horror or disgust about crime. Yet we anxiously look forward every morning for some thrilling criminal events. Do these reports, however sensational they may be, leave a permanent impression in our mind? Do they penetrate into the very core of our soul? Do they not but create a little fluttering on the surface, leaving the unknown depth of our soul totally untouched? Yes, it is so. However excited we may feel for the time being, we soon register these events in the uncatalogued book of oblivion. They come and they go. They cause but a temporary ripple. Then is there no really startling event in this world? King Yudhisthira's reply to the fourth question tells us the nature of the most sensational event of the day. A huge cooking process is going on in this universe. Delusive phenomenon is the caldron. The Sun is the eternal fire. Days and nights feed this fire. Ever-changing months and seasons supply the huge ladle by which the contents of this caldron are being constantly stirred. The beings are cooked there. And who can be the chef but the all-devouring Time? None is!

spared. Power, beauty, wealth, name, fame, everything disappears in time. The rich and the poor, the high and the low, the conqueror and the conquered, the wise and the fool, the king and the buffoon, all have but one *finale*, that is, in course of time they are withdrawn into the mighty womb of time. They say that the earth is now billions of years old. We only know its fragmentary history for the last five thousand years. But the play is ever going on on the stage. Heroes are born and they die. Scenes change. He who is the mighty emperor to-day becomes the most abject poor to-morrow. How many times the curtains ring down! But the play is going on. The string is held by Time. It is ushering in new people and scenes. Again it is Time that is making their Exit. Is it not the grandest event to ponder at?

From the foregoing story we have learned these lessons. Peace or happiness does not come from external possessions or enjoyments. It is to be found within. The more one shuts his eyes to the outside world, the nearer he comes to the light within. We should make sincere and sustained efforts to attain to this peace in this life. For nobody knows when death will overpower us. If there be any God or real Peace, that must be realized here and now. The state after death is uncertain. Death being the inevitable end of all things one should not get attached to any external object, which comprises all things from the beautiful house in front of me to my own beloved body. In order to realize truth one should follow the practical teachings of a Master. Mere book learning or intellectual gymnastic may thrill the mind but these do not touch the soul. The light from a living torch is necessary to light up another

candle though it may contain everything necessary for the combustion, viz., wax, wick, etc. And lastly if we look at the constant change that is going on in the world around us we get a wonderful lesson. Innumerable stars and planets are born every second and disappear again. Mighty Empires rise up and crumble down. Infancy passes into boyhood, boyhood becomes youth, youth goes into maturity. Then comes old age, senility. And lastly death. Everything is in a state of flux. Where is the permanence in this world? The introspective mind says, how do you get the idea of impermanence unless there is somewhere an idea of permanence? How is change possible without the substratum of changelessness? How is illusion possible without an underlying Reality?

* * *

EXTRACTS FROM A LECTURE

Delivered at the Vedanta Society by Swami Bodhananda

Spirituality constitutes the back-bone of the people of the East. During recent times Europe and America have been the scene of material and commercial progress. While the people of the West are interested and absorbed in material acquisition, those of the East (especially of India) have been intensely practical in spiritual realization. While this world and its enjoyments have been the goal of life to the people of the West, the theme of life in the East has been Renunciation. "Immortality is attained only through Renunciation." Under these circumstances to deliver the West from the depths of abject materialism and atheism, and perhaps to absorb a little of her material civilization, a mighty wave of spirituality has just started from the East again, which at no distant future will inundate the whole

western world with its omnipotent force. None can retard or resist its progress. It is a necessity of the time—a demand of cosmic evolution. Every man who has ears to listen can hear the distant murmurs of this flood of spiritual adjustment.

And this is not a new or strange phenomenon. It is an instance of the old, old law of readjustment. "History repeats itself." It has occurred times without number in the past and will be repeated again and again in the future. Every wave is preceded and succeeded by a chasm. Every pulsation has rest; every storm has lull; every rise has its fall. The present rise will have its fall again in course of time and a new wave will arise. The student of the history of humanity is well acquainted with this great significant cosmic law.

This spiritual adjustment will stand for no personalities, but for the Eternal Principle—for the truth that is without beginning and unending. It will be absolutely impersonal, unsectarian and universal. Within its wide bosom and arms it will accept and embrace all the special and personal creeds that have already been propounded to the world and that are yet to come. All these forms of religions are but practical manifestations of this one underlying principle. From the highest flight of absolute monism to the grossest form of dualism and symbolism, every phase of religion will find a place and recognition in this religion. Sectarianism, bigotry, intolerance, fanaticism, dissension and persecution have long possessed this beautiful earth and the time has come when these should cease to exist and in their place should reign love, harmony, toleration and peace.

It will be a man-making, strength-giving, vivifying, evil-

destroying and constructive religion. It will welcome truth from any source and condemn or hate none, but help, love, harmonize and sympathize with all.

Freedom is the condition of growth. Every individual shall be allowed freedom to choose his or her own religion. Variety or manifoldness is essential to evolution. To stop variety is to stop all growth and evolution. This religion will teach how to realize unity in variety, identity in diversity, and how to practically return love for hatred, blessing for curse, honor for insult and praise for blame—seeing the same self everywhere. It will preach no sin, but holiness; no damnation, but freedom; no fear, but love; no self-destruction, but self-realization; no torture, but eternal bliss. It will exhort its followers: "Do not care under what banner you march; do not care what be your color—green, blue, red or yellow—but mix them all up and produce that intense glow of white, the color of love."

This religion will come for the salvation of the whole human race. It will be everybody's religion, unlimited by temporal and spatial conditions. Proclaim, my friends, this mother of all religions to the nations of the world with the voice of love, blessing, benediction and peace.

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REPORT

Members and friends of the Vedanta Society of New York held a reception on the evening of Sunday, Oct. 16th, to extend their hearty welcome to Swami Nikhilananda, who has taken charge of the Society since the retirement of Swami Bodhananda from the active leadership of the center.

The auditorium was filled to capacity with enthusiastic

well-wishers of the Society, and the atmosphere of loving devotion towards both their retiring spiritual leader and his worthy successor was sustained throughout the gathering.

Several well-known speakers were invited to address the meeting. Mr. Ralph Robbins, president of the New York Vedanta Society, presided, and introduced Mr. Jagadish Chatterji as the first speaker of the evening.

Mr. Chatterji spoke with great warmth and feeling about the wonderful message of Swami Vivekananda to this country, and of the untiring devotion Swami Bodhananda had given to the teaching of the elevating philosophy of Vedanta during the twenty years of his sojourn in New York. On the firm basis of this accomplishment, Mr. Chatterji said, he felt sure that Swami Nikhilananda would succeed in extending the interest in this great study, to an ever-increasing body of serious thinkers, including American University circles.

Mr. Stanbury Hagar, Vice-President of the Society, then spoke of the many years of his association with it, and of the inspiration he and many others had received from the example of simplicity, sincerity and scholarship that Swami Bodhananda gave them all. Those assembled were especially pleased when Miss McLeod addressed them extemporaneously, adding a charming personal note because of her long and intimate contacts with the work and Swamis of the Ramakrishna Order, including Swami Vivekananda himself, in India as well as in the West. Mr. Dhan Gopal Mukerji spoke of Swami Bodhananda as a man of spiritual realization, in great contrast to the merely intellectual guidance usually found in this country. He added that Swami

Nikhilananda had already proven his spiritual mettle in India, both in the solitudes of a contemplative life and in his contacts with every grade of society there, from the very poorest to the courts of the Maharajahs.

Swami Bodhananda thanked the speakers and members for the friendly thoughts they had expressed, and proffered his good wishes to his spiritual brother and successor. These good wishes and those preceding, were received with warm appreciation by Swami Nikhilananda, who spoke, in closing the evening's function, of the great need of peace and understanding, of a living unity, in the world to-day.

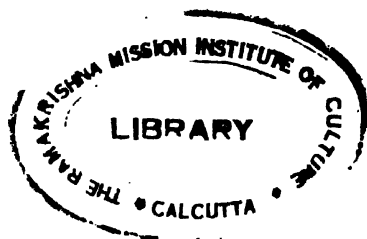
Refreshments prepared by Swamis Bodhananda and Nikhilananda were served before the friends and members of the Society disbanded. Everyone was impressed by the sweet harmoniousness of the occasion.

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ANNOUNCEMENT

The first number of the third volume of Vedanta Darpana will be issued in the first week of January, 1933. We are glad to announce that the second year has been as successful as the first, and we hope that through the support and sympathy of our friends and subscribers the third year will be more successful than the last two.

The prospective as well as the present subscribers are requested to send their subscriptions for the third volume at their earliest convenience. This will facilitate the registration of their names and addresses in due time. If the subscriber wishes to remit his subscription later, he will do us a great favour if he mentions the time when he can do so. We shall note his request and send a reminder before that.



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